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COMIC World

MARCH 1993

ISSUE NO 13

MOSLEY

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& IRON MAN!
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Well, some said it would never happen, but Comic World *is one year old today, and we proudly dedicate this issue to the cynic who shall remain nameless who said 'You'll not even see a second issue'. Now we're looking forward to another year, and (of course) the die-cut, silver embossed moving holographic cover with the extra metallic ink colour for issue 25 – only a year away. Just enough time to print the polybags and write a special pop-up, scratch 'n' sniff editorial. A no-prize competition springs to mind: can any of you come up with marketing ideas that companies have yet to try? Apart from selling comics on the quality of the stories, that is.*

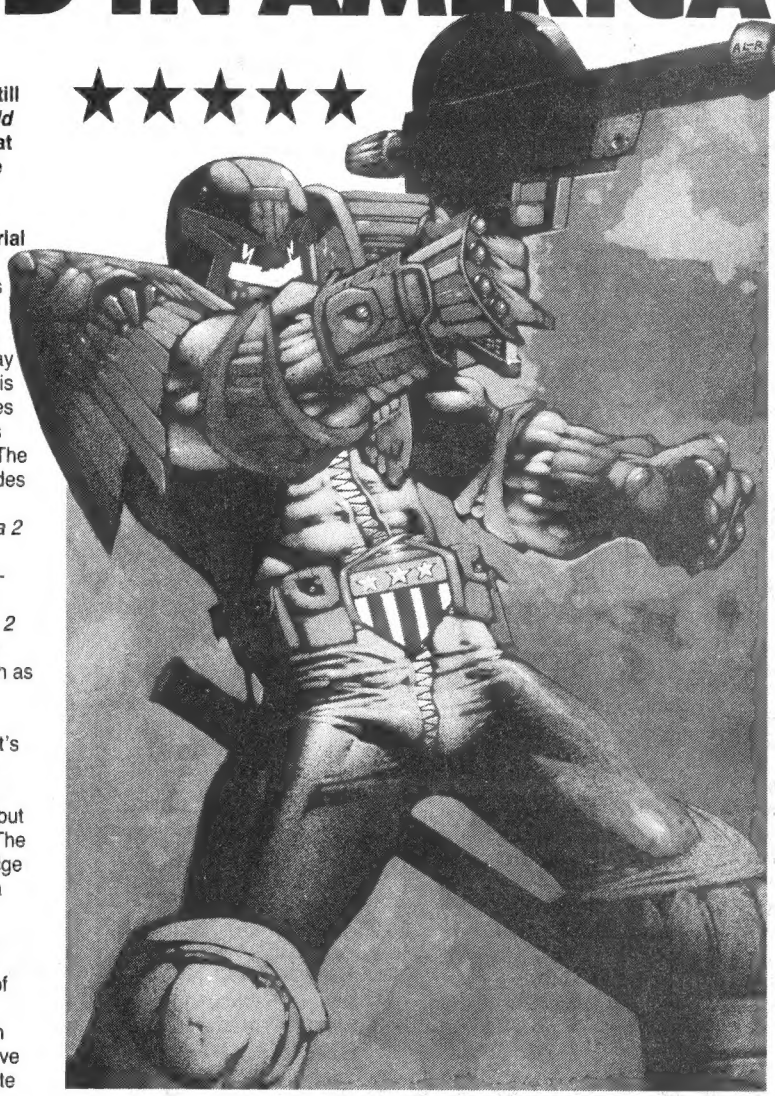
Our first birthday line-up marks the start of other anniversary celebrations on both sides of the Atlantic – Iron Man, the X-Men and 2000AD, *30, 30 and 16 respectively. Plenty of holo-covers from our American friends, and a special lead dispenser for* 2000AD *(no, not a Lawgiver – a pencil). How could we compete? The judges of a special Aceville internal memorandum competition quickly discounted the vicious, and frankly quite unnecessary, 'give away the editor competition'. Why give something away with the cover when you can give the whole cover away, we thought. One especially commissioned cover later we have our biggest competition to date, and with the help of Tundra and Dark Horse International we have 25 runner-up prizes of signed comics and posters. Our thanks to everyone involved.*

With all the excitement of organising the birthday celebrations a slight case of human error developed on our February issue. Who is Duncan FegrAdo? Could it be the alter ego of Duncan FegrEdo? A slip of the spell-checker meant that I messed up once, and my battered PC 'corrected' it a further 6 times – so please aim 6/7ths of your ire at the PC. It will be writing a letter of apology to Duncan vindicating me totally, and it couldn't have been me anyway because I was on holiday at the time.

We received news as this issue was being put to bed that Josh Palmano of Gosh! comics (see Letters, page 58) has had many of his seized comics returned, and Customs have now decided to take the case no further than issuing a destruction order on what the titles they have retained. Whilst this is good news, and has saved Josh from an expensive court case which he would almost certainly have lost, the problem with seizures still remains: with no test case to define guidelines, and no written guidence forthcoming from Customs as to what they are likely to seize in the future, distributors and retailers are still very much in the dark as to what they can import. The fact that Peter Pank *– published in this country by Knockabout – was also destroyed means that Customs are using the Consolidation Act of 1876 to rope in titles published in Britain along with imported titles. And how anyone can destroy* From Hell, *based on the most widely reported series of events in British history, the Jack the Ripper murders, is beyond me. One individuals tastes governing what is and what is not seized is a step closer to Mega-City's Judge/jury/executioner system few of us would wish to take.*

As I'm rapidly running out of room, a very brief mention of what's coming up next month: we've exclusive interviews with Gerry Anderson, Joe Quesada, Gary Erskine, John Burns, Ian Edginton and the creators of Shadow Riders, *another Masterclass session and the usual 'lots more besides'. See you on March 12th, Red Nose Day, for some Comic Relief!*

DREDD IN AMERICA



Although contracts have still to be signed, *Comic World* can exclusively reveal that DC will be picking up the license for Judge Dredd and the Judge Dredd universe which will allow them to produce their own material for American publication.

The deal follows the enormous success of the Dredd/Batman crossover, *Judgement on Gotham*, which was co-produced by Fleetway and DC in 1991. At present Dredd is available in a number of reprint titles published by Quality which reprints material already seen in *2000AD*. The March schedule from Quality includes *Dredd Rules 18*, *Judge Dredd Classics 77*, *Judge Dredd: America 2* (of 2), *Judge Dredd: Emerald Isle*, *Judge Dredd: Raptaur 1* (of 2); *Psi-Judge Anderson: Engram 1* (of 2), *Armitage 1* (of 2), and *Red Razors 2* (of 3), all set in the Dredd universe and all of which will end next month as the license expires.

Speaking for Fleetway, Igor Goldkind told us: "At the moment it's just very good intentions. I need to qualify everything by saying that contracts have not been finalised, but what I can confirm are intentions. The intention is that DC will license Judge Dredd for exclusive production of a range of Judge Dredd and Dredd universe characters done by American writers and artists in the States with an anticipated launch of Spring this year.

"Both John Wagner and Alan Grant are flying to New York; they've come up with a bible on how to write Dredd. They will most probably be kicking off the series to get the new formats consolidated, and then Dredd will be written and drawn by a host of top DC artists and writers. I can't confirm what the format will be or how many books are going to be launched, but obviously the Judge Dredd film is one of the pivotal aspects of why DC is interested in doing Dredd, and other characters as well – Judge Anderson, Judge Hershey, Judge Death...

"The artwork and projects will all be subject to Fleetway approval, so Fleetway will be maintaining the integrity of the characters as they would with any other company, but this is exceptional circumstances: DC is one of the two biggest comics publishers in the English language. If you look at the past history of Fleetway and DC's relationship it's a logical move; it makes sense that Fleetway and DC would continue to mutually exploit characters that are beneficial to both companies. *Judgement on Gotham 2* is already at the planning stage, although an artist hasn't been chosen.

"This is all being done slowly and methodically – both companies are very conscious of the market place and the kind of product and material that the readers want. DC have a very strong marketing edge in America. It's a very comfortable relationship that has evolved over a number of years."

The DC Dredd title(s) will be edited by Dan Raspler, and although artists and writers have still yet to be assigned we are told that "there are going to be some surprises as to who wants to do Judge Dredd. You'll see some new faces and some fan favourites as well."

MAXIMUM CARNAGE

A 14 part Spider-Man crossover begins in the new Spider-Man Unlimited 1 *entitled 'Maximum Carnage'. It sees the return of an all-new Carnage, and is the fifth regular Spider-title, a quarterly, weighing in at 64 pages of coated stock. The writer is Marvel Editor-in-Chief, Tom DeFalco, with artist by Ron Lim & Jim Sanders III. The crossover continues through next month's Spider-Man titles, but before then there are a blitz of continued anniversary celebrations – and you thought it was a all over?*

Spectacular Spider-Man 200 *is an anniversary issue, with the return of Green Goblin and the death of an integral character. Could it be Aunt May? Will the old heart finally give out? If that's not enough, there's always* Web of Spider-Man 100, *which concludes the Bloodrose/Richard Fisk saga. Both have holo-grafx web covers.*

Spider-Man Classics 2 *is a reprint of* Amazing Spider-Man 1. Venom Returns *is a trade-paperback reprint of* Amazing Spider-Man 331-332 *&* 344-347, *whilst* Spider-Man vs Venom *is a reprint of* Amazing Spider-Man 300 *&* 315-317 *behind a new Todd McFarlane cover; Venom also stars in* Deathtrap: The Vault, *representing the super-villains break-out from prison in bookshelf format. The way Peter Parker gets round you could easily believe he's got eight legs...*

SUPER

Or is he? The latest news from DC is that *Adventures of Superman 500*, shipping April 13, gives the Death of Superman a new twist: Pa Kent lies in a coma, and meets his son on a different plane, joining forces to fight save each other from what lies beyond the light at the end of the tunnel. Pa's will to live brings him back – but what about Superman? DC Editor, Mike Carlin, said "Since Superman died, we've heard a million theories about his coming back. The time has come to solve the mystery and get on with the never-ending battle. We told you the story wasn't over just because

X-MEN UNLIMITED

The new quarterly *X-Men Unlimited* debuts in April, a 64 page special in the same format as March's *Spider-Man Unlimited* (see elsewhere in the news for details). The first issue features Professor X, Storm and Cyclops fighting for their lives when the Acolyte Siena Blaze sabotages their flight to the Savage Land. Written by Scott Lobdell, and with artwork by Chris Bachalo & Dan Panosian, *X-Men Unlimited* ships April 27.

Also coming in April from Marvel is the third in Jim Starlin's trilogy, following on from *Infinity Gauntlet* and *Infinity War*. *Infinity Crusade* is a 6-issue series with art by Ron Lim & Al Milgrom.

NBM BUY UP CATALAN STOCK

NBM (otherwise Nantier, Beall, Minoutchine) have concluded a deal with European publishers and agents to take over 22 titles from Catalan Communications, including virtually the whole backlist of titles by Milo Manara, Giardino, and work by Crepax, Torres, Boucq and Cabanes. NBM has already published the sequel to Manara's* Click!, *and announced the sequel to the successful Catalan title,* Squeak the Mouse *for March publication.

Many of the titles are only available in the UK in limited numbers – some were amongst stock retained by customs in the recent raid on Gosh! Comics.

★★ US NEWSBRIEF ★★

DARK HORSE

A new James Bond adventure debuts in March, the 4-part *A Silent Armageddon* bi-monthly, written by Simon Jowett with fully painted art by John Burns. Watch out for our feature next month which will reveal more about Bond's battle with the ultimate computer, Omega.

Angus McKie is better known as a book cover artist these days, but his latest comic offering arrives in March, *The Blue Lily*, a 4-part deluxe format series featuring a sentient robot detective. Rusty Spade is a hardboiled metaphysical detective whose simple missing persons case turns into a high intrigue of corporate crime.

John Byrne's *Next Men* are collected into both hardcover (at $29.95) and softcover ($14.95). Issues 0-6 introduce Byrne's genetically enhanced Project Next Men into an unfamiliar world, although they become more of a liability to their government creators.

Johji Manabe is the author/artist of *Outlanders Special 1*, a prequel to Dark Horse's original series in which Battia sets out to retrieve the wayward Princess Kahm who is in hiding on a planet of cutthroats and thieves.

FANTACO

Night of the Living Dead: London debuts in March, a two-issue series written by Clive Barker & Steve Niles with art by Carlos Kastro, bringing the dead to Britain. The monarchy is in ruins, the Royal Family and clergy desperately trying to hold the country together whilst zombies stalk the streets.

FANTAGRAPHICS

Ho Che Anderson's *Black Dogs* is a prelude to his three issue biography of Martin Luther King, a brief (16 pages) but vivid portrait of black fear, frustration and understanding.

The Life and Death of Fritz the Cat collects together Robert Crumb's classic stories into one 100 page volume (priced $9.95), plus an original Crumb cover.

Under the 'Hard Boiled Comics' imprint, Fantagraphics is releasing the classic European series *Torpedo* by Enrique Sanchez Abuli & Jordi Bernet as a regular comic, re-translated and including stories previously unpublished in English language.

IMAGE COMICS

The big news for March is the Frank Miller written *Spawn 11*, although the title is running slightly late at present; Geof Darrow provides a poster for the issue.

Also due in March is *The Maxx 1* by Sam Keith, graduating from the pages of *Darker Image* and *Tribe 1* by Todd Johnson & Larry Stroman, the story of a group brought together under the leadership of Murdock Ellison, a.k.a. Blindspot. The group, Shift, Hannibal, The Front, Steel Pulse, Fly Girl, Short Order and Out Cold, face corporate high-jinks from the powerful Europan International

US Newsbrief continued on page 8

MAN BACK FROM THE DEAD

there was a dead body on the last page of *Superman 75*."

More is revealed on April 27 when *Action Comics 687*, *Adventures of Superman 501*, *Superman 78* and *Superman: Man of Steel 22* all ship, each containing a hero claiming to be Superman reincarnated. Which is the real Superman:

- The cyborg from space – half machine, half alien. He says he's Superman retooled for the future, and no-one has the guts to contradict him.
- The cold super-being who sets up shop in the Fortress of Solitude and relentlessly takes the law into his own hands – even if it means he must shoot first and ask questions later?
- The super-powered teenager who appears to be cloned from the first Superman? He must be – why else would he have no memories of a private life?
- The steelworker John Henry Iron, buried alive during Superman's battle with Doomsday who uses his talents to create a high-tech suit of armour and weaponry to, literally, become a man of steel?

And if any one of these is Superman, why can't anyone find Clark Kent?

Adventures 500 begins 'The Reign of the Supermen' with a 64 page special by Jerry Ordway, Tom Grummett & Doug Hazlewood, with special pages by Dan Jurgens, Louise Simonson, Roger Stern and Karl Kesel (who will be replacing Ordway as regular writer), Bogdanove & Dennis Janke, and Jackson Guice & Denis Rodier. There's a special removable translucent cover panel over a painted Jerry Ordway cover for the special Collectors Edition (the newsstand edition has a different cover by Grummett/Hazlewood) and the four revived titles have special die-cut covers.

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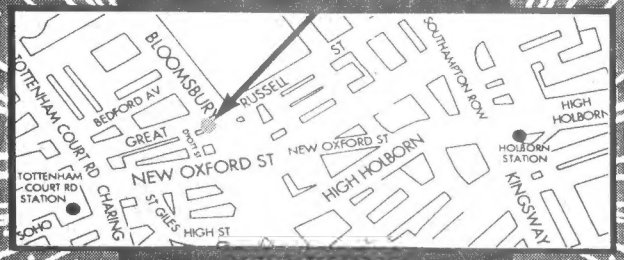

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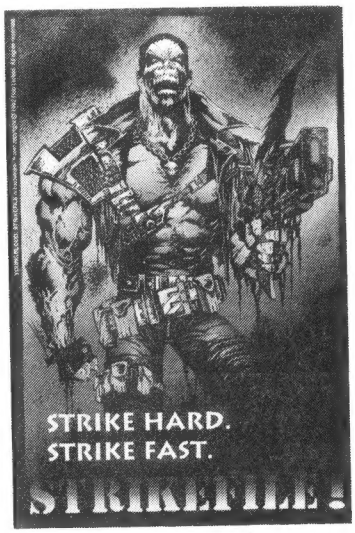
★★ US ★★ NEWSBRIEF

CONTINUED

technology and research outfit.

Youngblood: Strike File 1 is a 4-part series highlighting individual members of Youngblood. First out are Diehard and Chapel, the latter a one-off story drawn by Jae Lee.



TOPPS

Topps continue to milk the horror film market with *Friday the 13th: Jason Goes to Hell*, a 3-parter by Andy Mangels, Cynthia Martin & Allen Nunis in which the hockey masked horror is blasted to bits by the FBI. Polybagged with 3 exclusive trading cards issue one has a glow-in-the-dark cover.

TUNDRA

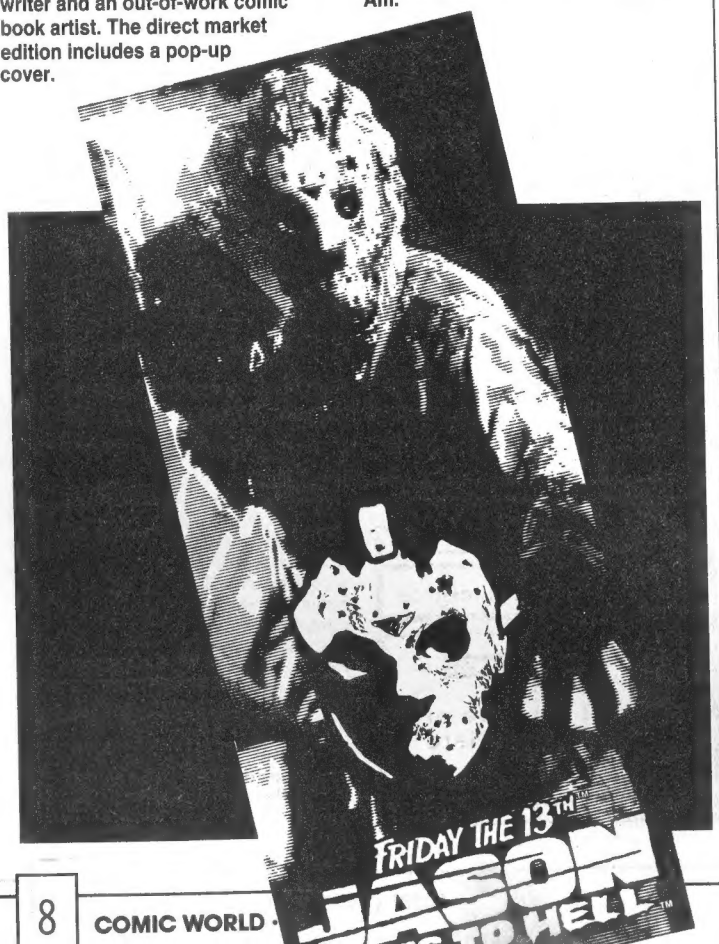
The Complete Bojeffries Saga is a collection of Alan Moore & Steve Parkhouse's tales of not-normal folk from the pages of *Warrior* and *A1* gathered together for the first time.

VALIANT

Magnus: Robot Fighter celebrates 25 issues with a silver foil enhanced cover, a new costume and the final destruction of North Am.

MALIBU

Following the death of Superman, the United States needs a superhero, and who better than Sergio Aragones' *The Mighty Magnor*, who debuts in March. Magnor is an alien robot who crash-landed in the USA, discovered by an would-be screen-writer and an out-of-work comic book artist. The direct market edition includes a pop-up cover.



DC NEWS

THE MAIM GAME

Lobo's returns in a new 4-part mini-series in April, *Lobo: Unamerican Gladiators*. And joining him are The Outcasts, B.D. Rickenbacker, Killer Kowalski and Yancy Queeg, the hero-in-a-bucket, and The Satan Brothers. And the Beast from Sixty Fathoms. And anyone else who wants the prizes that are up for grabs, the planet Zarotey, a year's holiday on Waltsworld, a jewel-encrusted bazooka, gold from the vaults of Gazza, cuddly toy...er...

It's all available Live from Mondo Carno with your hosts John Wagner, Alan Grant & Cam Kennedy who hosted the original *Outcasts* maxi-series. Mike Mignola provides covers.

SANDMAN AT 50

Neil Gaiman & P. Craig Russell join forces to produce 'Ramadan' in *Sandman 50*, shipping April 20, a 48-page special with a black wraparound, metallic ink cover by Dave McKean. If you read our interview with Neil last month you'll know that this is the long-awaited 'Arabian Nights' story, featuring Haroun al Raschid, King of ancient Baghdad. Haroun lives in the most wonderful of palaces, with the finest and most beautiful of riches surrounding him; his only want is for immortality for his beloved Baghdad, and to achieve that he bargains and begs a gift from the Lord of Dreams.

Also from Vertigo is the collected *Sandman: A Game of You*, a 192 page hardcover priced $29.95, shipping May 4. It will be followed later in the year by a trade paperback edition.

ROUND-UP

As revealed by Tom Veitch i our January issue, *Kamandi: At Earth's End* ships May 4 under the Elseworlds banner. Veitch has taken the classic Kirby creation and sets hi against the Man of Tomorrow: Kamandi is sent by Machine Mother, an artificial intelligence that has nurtured the last boy on Earth since he was seven, to seek out the cause of the Second Apocalypse. The six-issue series pencilled by newcomer Frank Gomez and inked by Mike Barrei

Justice League Task Force is new ongoing monthly, led by the Martian Manhunter and using a rotating cast of Justice League members and other DC heroes to tackle situations that may need mor covert handling rather than just sending the boys round. Like *Leger of the Dark Knight*, the series will rotate creators, the first 3-part story

being the work of David *(Amazing Spider-Man)* Michelinie, Sal *(X-O Manowar, Rai)* Velluto & inker Jeff Albrecht. The story teams up Nightwing, Aquaman, Green Lantern and Flash to face a new villain, Blitz.

The latest Milestone title is *Static*, the story of 15 year old Virgil Hawkins who tracks down a gang who humiliated him to Paris Island on the night of the 'Big Bang', only to be irradiated with the same radioactive marker that created Blood Syndicate. Now he finds he can use electrostatic powers to create his own force-field, fly, and produce lightning. Written by Dwayne McDuffie & Robert L. Washington, art is provided by John Paul Leon & Steve Mitchell.

And the latest Vertigo title is the return of *The Geek*, resurrected under the 'Vertigo Visions' umbrella title for one-shot specials. This one's a 64-pager with Rachel Pollock writing and Michael Dalton Allred, of *Madman* fame, on artwork. Brother Power returns to face Dr. Abuse and his Corruption Elementals. Off-beat only goes halfway to describe it.

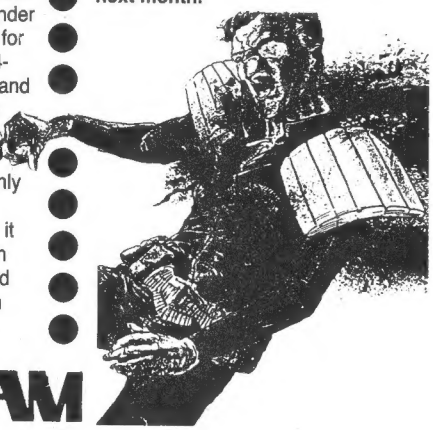
With so much else going on, it would be easy to overlook the 75th issues of both *Wonder Woman* and *Green Arrow*, and not a polybag in sight...looks like someone did.

BRITISH NEWS

UK NEWSBRIEF

DARK HORSE

Aliens #9 features the beginning of 'Aliens: Sacrifice' by Pete Milligan & Paul Johnson (see our interview this issue), as well as the first episode of 'Aliens: Colonial Marines', reprinting the American mini-series, and a bound in mini-comic by Mike Richardson & Denis Beauvais reprinting material that ran one page at a time in *Dark Horse Insider*. Part two appears next month.



FLEETWAY

'Mechanismo' returns to the pages of the *Judge Dredd Megazine* in issue 22 (on sale 20 February), painted by Peter Doherty from John Wagner's script, a five part sequel to the recent Colin MacNeil strip: the robo-judges have been taken out of commission, but number five is still alive. The same issue sees the start of a 3-part Judge Anderson story, 'The Jesus Syndrome', by Alan Grant & Arthur Ranson which sees Cassie on the wrong side of the law when the Judges have to cope with the rise of Christianity in Mega-City One, leading to a new eight-part space sage due in issue 27 by Grant & Kevin Walker. Dredd appears in a 'Heavy Metal Dredd' tale, 'Sleeze 'n' Ryder' and 'Al's Baby' continue; and you'll find more of the same in issue 23, with John Smith taking on his first Dredd story.

Comag officially take over distribution of Fleetway titles on February 16 from IPC Marketforce following a two year deal.

HARPER COLLINS

February 21 sees the publication of horror novelist Dean Koontz's *Trapped*, illustrated by Bilau, and the collection *Miracleman: The Golden Age* by Neil Gaiman & Mark Buckingham, both in the Eclipse Graphic Novels series. The line-up for the next couple of months includes Clive Barker's *Revelations* in March and *Dread* in May, and Doris Lessing's original graphic novel *Playing the Game*, due April 22 with fully painted art by Daniel ('Bible John') Vallely. Over the next two years HarperCollins plan to publish 24 titles.

MANDARIN

The second batch of '2000AD Books' are launched by Mandarin on March 11, following the success of last September's launch. The three new titles include *Devlin Waugh: Swimming in Blood* by John Smith & Sean Phillips, previously serialised in the relaunched *Judge Dredd Megazine*, *Heavy Metal Dredd* reprinting the Dredd stories from *Rock Power* by John Wagner, Alan Grant & Simon Bisley, and *Top Dog* which pitches Dredd against Strontium Dog Johnny Alpha, two tales by Wagner/Grant & Colin MacNeil and

British News continued on page 12

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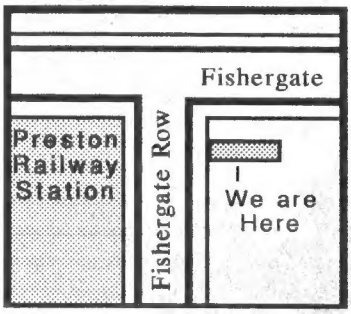

...Marvel, DC, Image, Valiant & many other **Independents.** All were bagged, both **New Comics** and the 1000's of **Back Issues. Standing Orders** are at a 15% Discount, which makes their regular customers very happy. One could buy both **Comic & Magazine Bags** and **Acid Free Backing Boards.**

The range of **Trading Cards** is extensive, and the opportunity to trade in cards against a Wants List is an attractive feature. A full range of **Trading Card Protection Gear**, including **9-Pocket Sleeves & Snap Lock Boxes**, of various sizes is on sale.

I could not help but note that the **Videos** were cheaper than the standard High Street prices. **Original Artwork** for sale includes pieces by Bryan Talbot, John Ridgway & Dave Taylor. There were **Graphic Novels** priced from £1·95.

For the Role-Player there is an extensive range of **Figures** including **AD&D, Grenadier & Heartbreaker** which heartily compliment the selection of both New & Second-Hand **Role-Playing Games & War Games.**

I must return to examine more closely the **T-Shirts, Posters, Calenders, Novels, Magazines, Models, Prints & Merchandising** also stocked at some other time...

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BRITISH NEWS

CONTINUED

Garth Ennis & John Burns. The books are priced £6.99, £4.99 and £5.99 respectively.

MARVEL

John Freeman, editor of *Overkill* and the related line of American comics, is leaving Marvel to concentrate on freelance writing. John, the long-time editor of *Dr Who Monthly/Magazine*, recently handed over the reigns of the latter to Gary Russell; in the past he has written widely for the company, from Who to Real Ghostbusters, his current assignments including the forthcoming *Shadow Riders*, scheduled for April, with further titles currently under discussion.

Lined up for later in the year from Marvel are three batches of new titles, the first group of three in June which include *Battle Tide 2*, reuniting the team of the first series for a further 4 issues, *Killpower*, another 4-issue series, and *Death's Head/Die Cut*, a two issue mini-series introducing a new character who will graduate to his own title a few months later; in July comes the new Frontier line of non-superhero titles, *Immortalis* by Nick Vince & Mark Buckingham, *Children of the Voyager* by Nick Abadzis & Paul Johnson, and *Blood Seed* by Paul Neary & Liam Sharp; and August's trio titles will appear under the umbrella title 'Gene Pool'. More details next issue.

TITAN BOOKS

Titan release a collected edition of the Topps *Dracula* film adaptation on February 11, priced £7.99. Also available is the Dave Gibbons/ Steve Rude/Karl Kesel Batman & Superman adventure, *World's Finest*, priced £8.99, and *Batman: Shaman* by Denny O'Neil, Ed Hannigan & John Beatty, priced £7.99.

ANIME DAY

The third annual Anime Day will be held at the Rutland Hotel, Sheffield, over the weekend of Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 of April. For more information and a registration details, write to Anime Day, 14 Cavendish Place, Maltby, Rotherham, S. Yorkshire S66 7DW.

CAPTION '93

'The Thinking Man's Comic Convention' returns following the success of Caption '92. The Oxford Comic Convention will be held on July 17, described as a "chatty, friendly, hands-on event". Guests already confirmed include Nick Abadzis, Martin Barker, Ed Hillyer and Carol Swain. Advance membership costs £8 before April 1, and £12 afterwards. Cheques should be made out to CAPTION, and all enquiries to 25 Hart Street, Oxford OX2 6BN.

Continued on page 14

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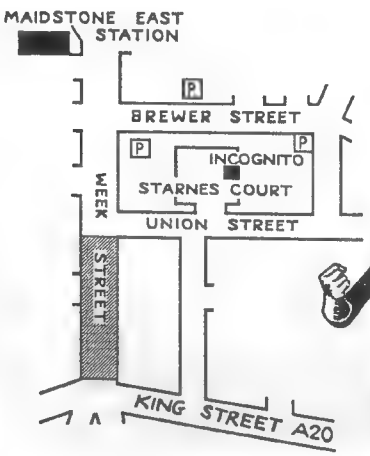

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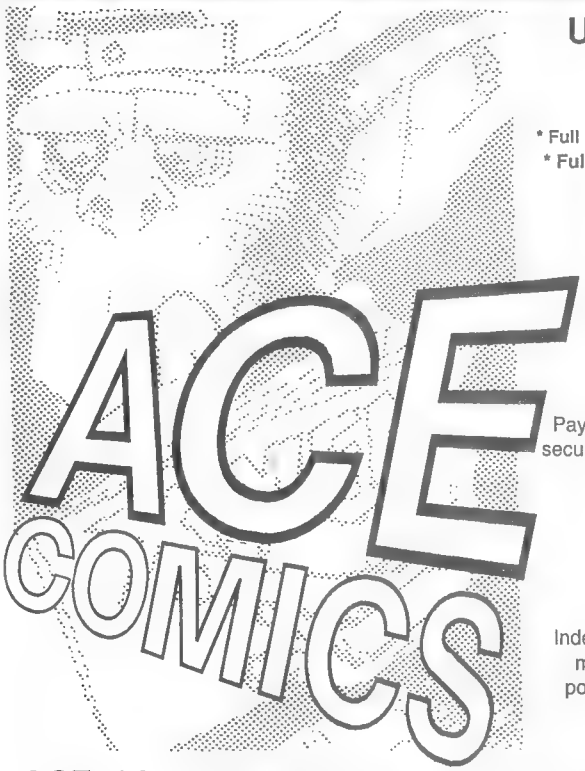

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BRITISH NEWS

CONTINUED

CARTOON COUNTY

Cartoon County is a major exhibition on show at the Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton, from February 11 to March 13. There will be over 40 Sussex based professionals cartoonists exhibiting; galleries, libraries, museums and book shops all over Sussex have related displays, plus workshops and activities aimed at all ages.

On Saturday February 27 there will be a Comic Mart. For further details contact Sue Rigby on 0273 685 447.

MARVEL

CABLE GOES MONTHLY

Fabien Nicieza & Art Thibert are the team behind the new ongoing *Cable* series which following his 'death' in the 'X-Cutioner's Song' crossover. Cable is no longer driver to alter events to save his future, instead he teams up again with the reformed Six Pack mercenaries and tracks down people who threaten his new timeline, beginning with the New Canaanites.

ROUND UP

***Alpha Flight 120* is a 10th anniversary issue, polybagged with an 11x17 poster of the Canadian Mutant Registration Act, plus an Alpha Flight pin-up.**

The Invaders is a 4-issue mini-series by Roy Thomas re-introducing some of the Golden Age heroes of the 1940s – Captain America, the Sub-Mariner and the Human Torch (Marvel's first ever heroes) take on a group of American superheroes turned Nazi.

Mad Dog is based on an American TV series, *Bob!*, a comedy series about a comic strip artist who has created Mad Dog for the fictional Ace Comics. Marvel's two-in-one version has Bob McKay's favoured 1960s version by Ty Templeton & Jeff Albrecht, the flip side being the publisher's gritty vigilante style comic by Evan Dorkin, Gordon Purcell & Ray McCarthy.

The new 6-issue *Meteor Man*, based on Robert Townsend's film, debuts in March, continuing from last month's film adaptation.

Moon Knight hits 50 issues, with a die-cut cover of Moon Knight burning his Avengers ID card.

All Marvel Annuals have a 'Rookie' trading card to introduce new characters: this month's titles include *Amazing Spider-Man Annual 27* with Makeshift, Avengers Annual 22 has Bloodwraith, *Captain America Annual 12* has Battling Bantam, *New Warriors Annual 3* has Void, and *X-Factor Annual 8* has Charon.

Epic launch their 'Heavy Hitters' line with *Dragon Lines*, hard-edged science fiction with pencils by Ron Lim, mixing martial arts, Chinese mythology, magic and terrorism; *Lawdog*, Epic's other March debut, is Chuck Dixon's latest creation, a guardian of the dimensions with his punk teenage sidekick and psychotic biker gangs.

X-MEN ANNIVERSARY

John Romita Jr. returns to provide pencils for *Uncanny X-Men 300*, a special double-sized anniversary issue in which Nightcrawler and Forge head to France in search of the Acolytes; one young Acolyte could hold the key to Fabian Cortez's deadly secret – with Moira MacTaggert's life hanging in the balance. *Wolverine 69* ties in as Wolvie travels back to the Savage Land with Rogue to investigate Magneto's last base of operation, only to meet up with Sauron.

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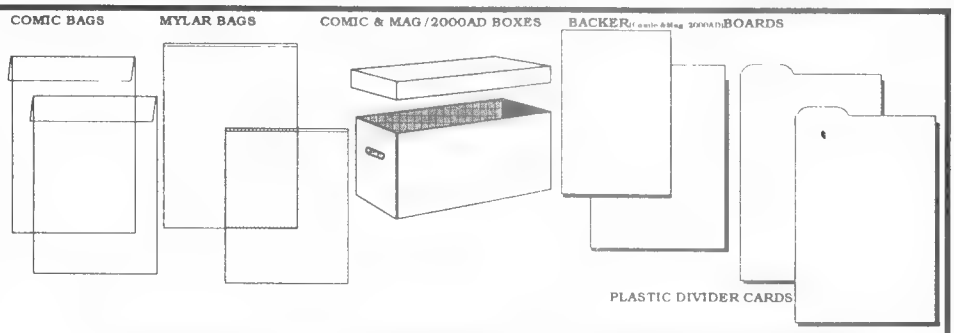

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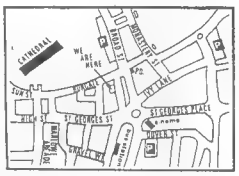

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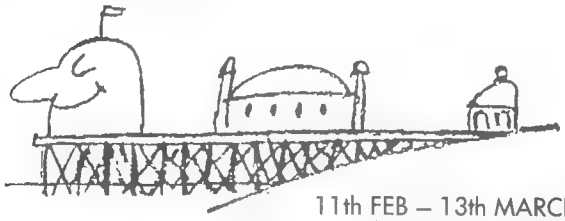

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SPOTLIGHT

The Cartoon Art Trust kicked off the new year with the news that Lynton plc will allow the Trust to remain at their current address until early 1994. The Trust is situated at Carriage Row, 163-203 Eversholt Street, London NW1 in two ground-floor galleries and was set up as an educational charity to raise funds to establish a permanent home for a National Museum of Cartoon Art, ranging from the time of Hogarth to the present day.

Describing the current exhibition as a 'museum in miniature', the continued use of the Lynton buildings will allow further fund-raising appeals, and allow the public to get a taste of the range of cartoon art produced in Britain over the years. CAT members were given a private viewing of the *All the World's a Stage* exhibition on November 18 1992 featuring cartoons from the Alan Cuthbertson Collection. A spirited and highly informative talk by Lionel Lambourne of the Victoria & Albert Museum should soon be available to visitors to the exhibition as commentary for a guided tour on tape.

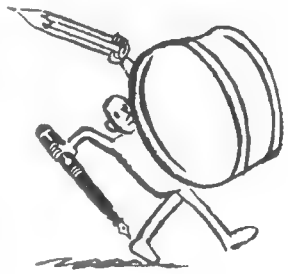
Just opened is a new bi-lingual exhibition of original cartoons in the Museum's second gallery. Entitled *Frontiers*, it is a satirical survey of Britain's attitudes to her new European partners, from detante to the Chunnel, from de Gaulle to Maastricht. Selected by Colin Seymour-Ure, Liz Ottaway and Jane Day at the University of Kent's Cartoon Study Centre from their collection of 80,000 original drawings. In his introduction to the fully-illustrated catalogue, Seymour-Ure explains, "Frontiers may be solid fact or thin abstration – Berlin Wall or 'Iron Curtain'. Either way, they are potent symbols and very useful to cartoonists. After putting these themes into historical perspective with a small group of prints by Hogarth, Austin, Gillray, Janet, Heath, Cruikshank and Daumier, the exhibition concentrates on post-War newspaper cartoons from 1948 to 1991, and includes examples by 'Emmwood' (*Daily Mail*), 'Vicky' and Reg Smythe (*Daily Mirror*), Michael Cummings and Giles (*Daily Express*), Ralph Steadman (*The Times*) and Nicholas Garland (*Daily Telegraph*) and many others.

Supported by the International Press Foundation, *Frontiers* will continue at the Museum until March 19 when it will travel to France to appear at the City Bibliotheque in Bordeaux between April 23 and May 24, and the villa Formose in Pau from May 28 to June 17.

On a slightly different note, Jonathan Ross and Channel X Productions have donated three life-size machines based on William Heath Robinson's original cartoons for automatic labour-saving devices, one to feed cats, one which pours bottles of wine, and one which cooks and individually spoons peas!

The models were the work of Derek Jenkins and Pierre Bohanna of DJJ Models, and were commissioned by Ross for his new ITV show, *Fantastic Facts* which starts in April as part of an episode on incredible inventions which will include an interview with Heath Robinson's son, Oliver, and with Simon Heneage. Also featured are some fanciful contraptions built by cartoonist Rowland Emett.

The Museum will be opening longer hours from February 10, now open Monday to Friday 12-6pm with a late opening on Thursday till 7pm. For more information you should contact Paul Gravett on 071 388 4326.



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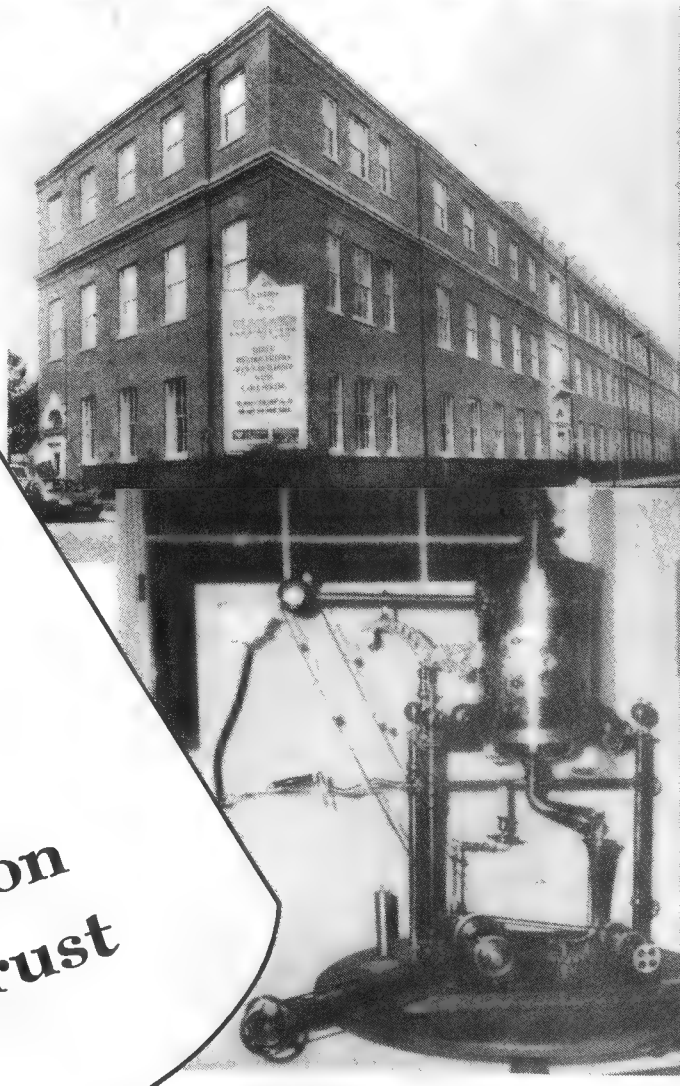

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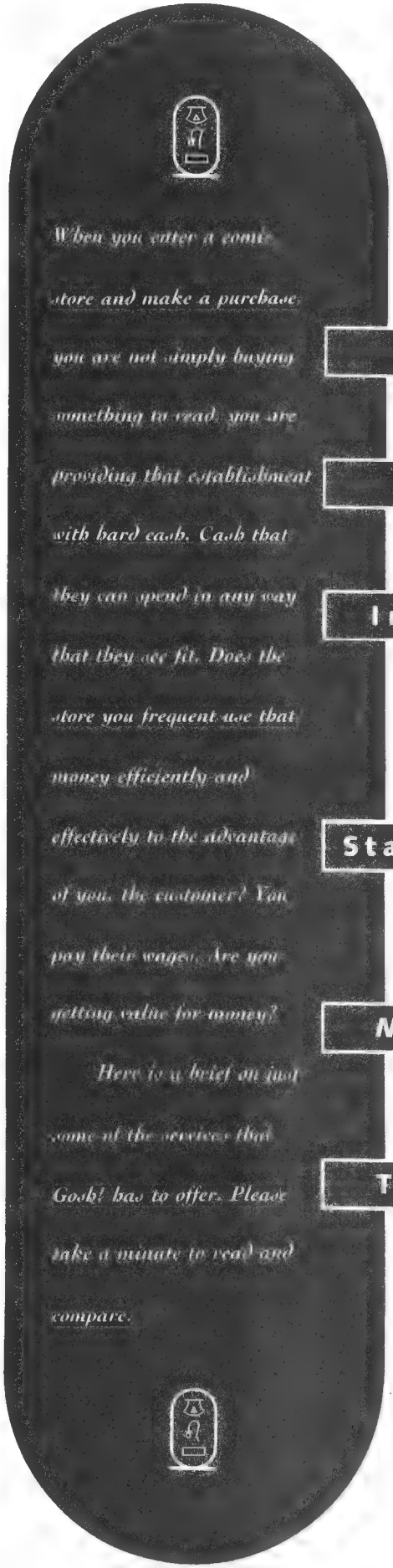
The Cartoon Art Trust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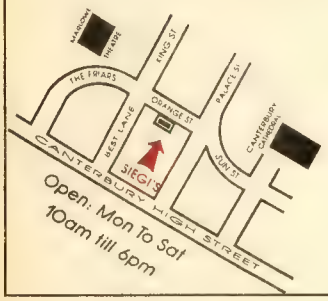

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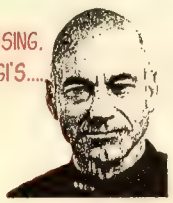

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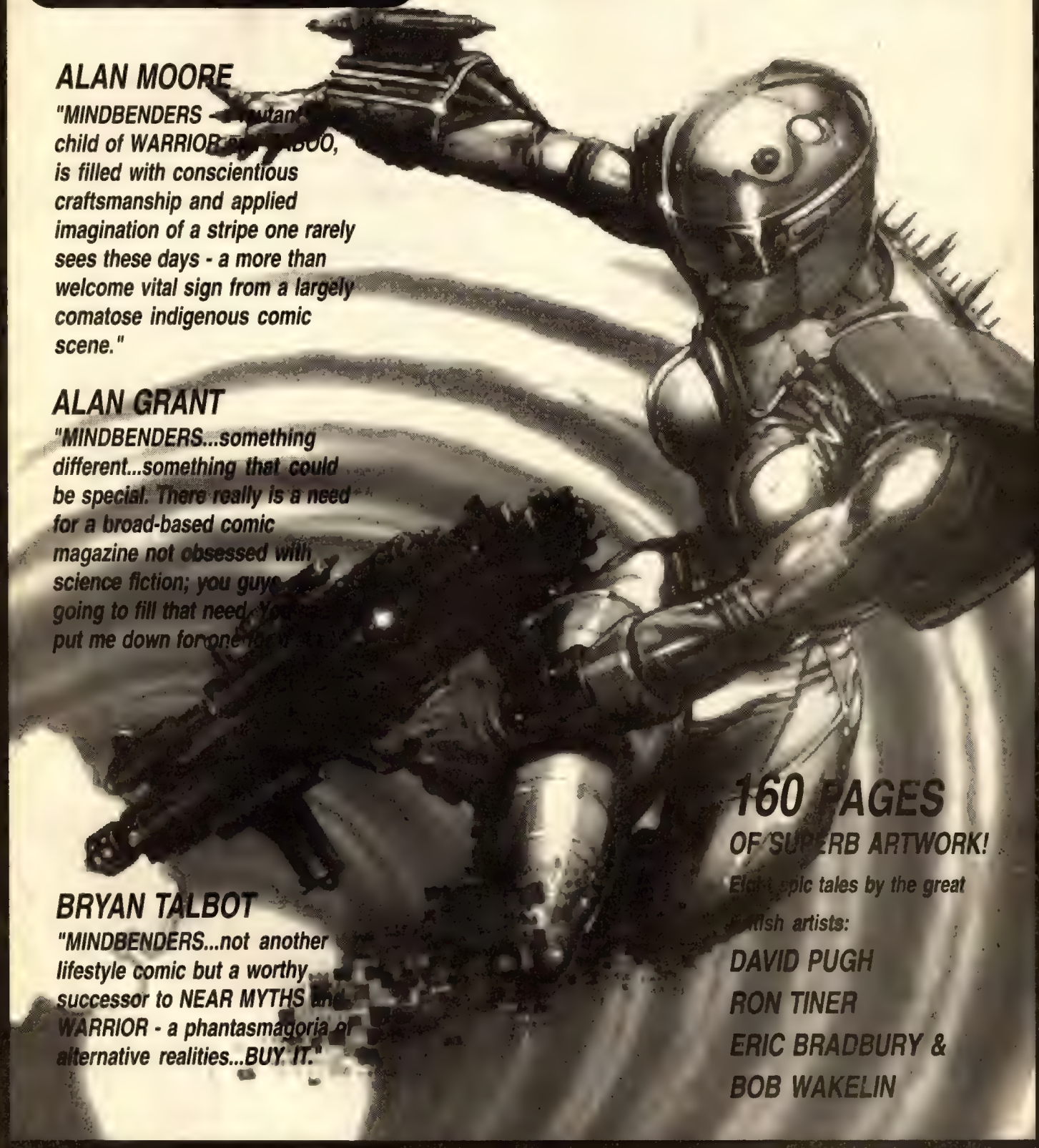

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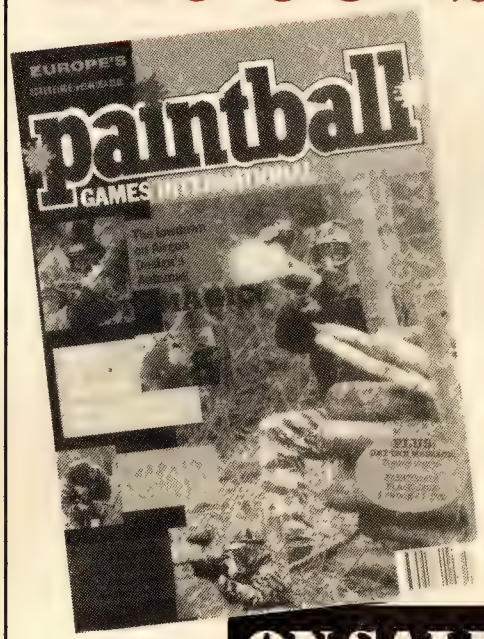

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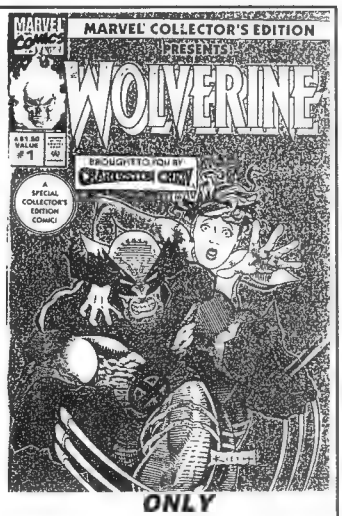

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*ANTICIPATING THE MUCH-TOUTED DEATH OF DC'S MAN OF STEEL BY A FEW MONTHS, THE TEMPORARY DEMISE OF MARVEL'S MAN OF IRON COUPLED WITH THREE ANNIVERSARY ISSUES FALLING WITHIN THE SAME YEAR HAS GIVEN ONE OF MARVEL'S OLDEST HEROES AN UNEXPECTED SHOT IN THE METALLIC ARM. NOT THAT HE NEEDED IT: DISCERNING FANS HAVE BEEN PICKING UP **IRON MAN** IN INCREASING NUMBERS EVER SINCE THE NEW CREATIVE TEAM OF LEN KAMINSKI (WRITER) AND KEV HOPGOOD (ARTIST) TOOK OVER. KAMINSKI, HOPGOOD AND EDITOR NEL YOMTOV DISCUSSED THE LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK WITH ALAN WOOLLCOMBE.*

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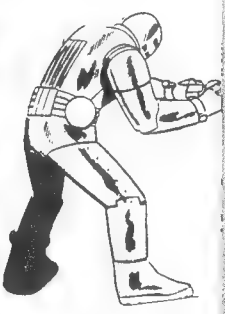
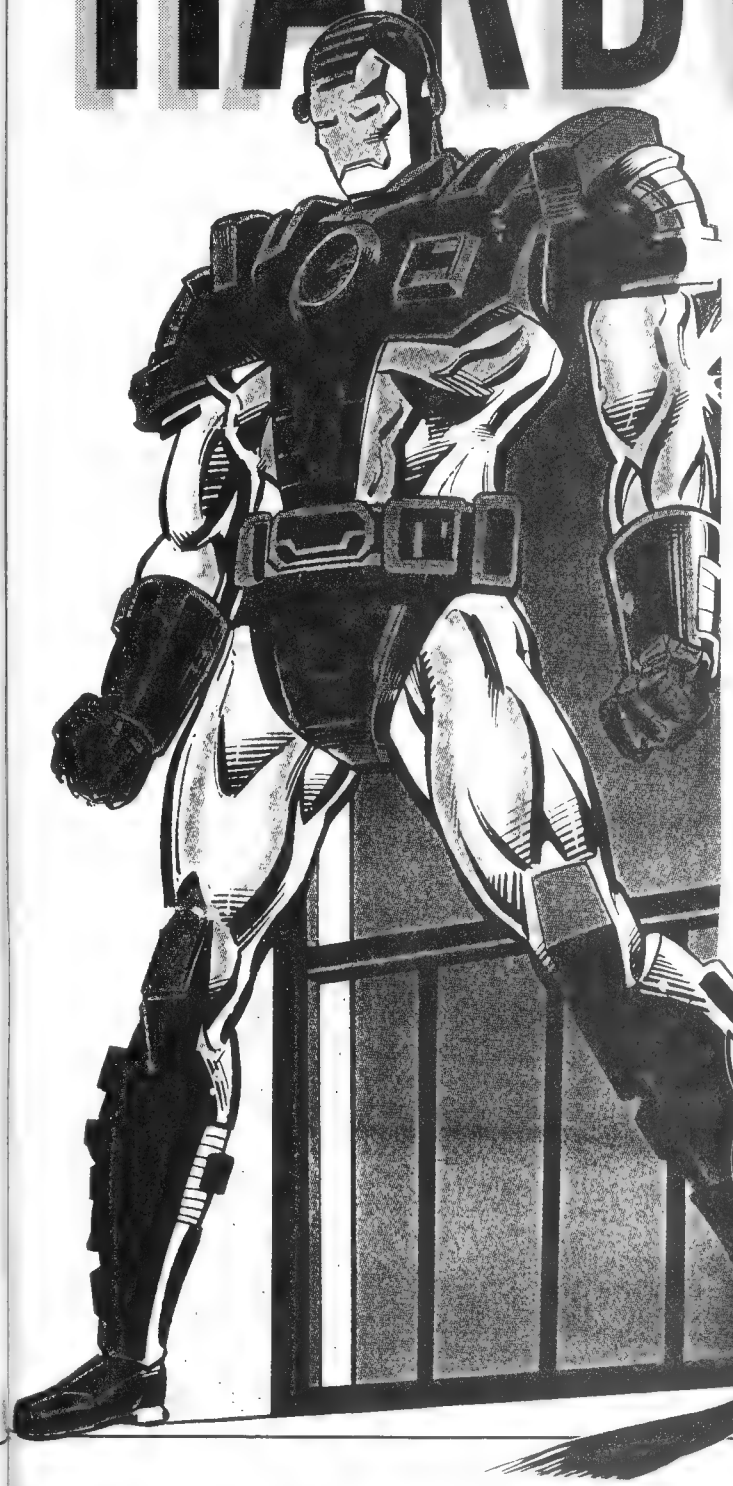




"THERE HAS BEEN A CERTAIN GRIMNESS THAT HAS PERVADED ALL OF COMICS FOR A FEW YEARS NOW"

◀ *Rhodey takes on the mantle of Iron Man*

You know the immaculate conception theory of how comics are conceived? An editor hires a writer and an artist, they all get together and *SHAZAM!* a strip is born, free of any but the very teensiest of teething troubles. Disagreements? Don't know the meaning of the word. Problems? Nahh . . . This is what editors would like to happen. This is also what comic companies would like you, the readers, to believe happens. Disunity disenchants the comic buyer, or so the belief goes, so everyone involved presents a united front.

Not so with the men behind *Iron Man*. These stout fellows air their dissentient sentiments for all the world to see. You're not wild about the hero's new look? "It has turned out that [the new armour] has got these little ribby bits on. I'm still not 100% happy about it but I don't think it looks too awful. I got bullied into it!" You suspect that fancy foil covers and other such items are merely gimmicks to lure the rubes away from their monthly X-fix? "You bet! Any time we can squeeze any kind of special promotion out of the sales guys, we will! The sales department is really very hesitant to do much with anything they don't see as a surefire winner – they would rather promote the *X-Men* because if they put their money into the *X-Men* they'll get a return on it."

Marvel's marketing department might have a fit at this honesty-with-knobs-on approach but what does come across is that all three creators like each other, like the book and like the way it's going. They're just not afraid to give you the unexpurgated version, warts and all – "Print it if you want."

Take seasoned penciller Kev Hopgood: after short runs on this and that for *2000AD* and Marvel UK, not to mention doing storyboards for adverts and appearing as The Artist in a BBC short film on how comics are created, this is his first regular comic series, and very happy with it he is too, thank you very much. "Len [Kaminski] is the best writer I've worked with so far – he has got good ideas and I really enjoy doing it. This is my big break in American comics and I'm glad I've got it but" – *Uh-oh* – "mind you, I've worked with some dogs." He then proceeds to cheerfully name names and toss in the odd expletive deleted at these canines.

Turn to writer Len Kaminski. A seven-year career at Marvel, including stints writing *Morbius* (the first eight issues) and *Dr Strange* (three issues), has given him an itch to tell the truth no matter what editorial policy might dictate to the contrary. " 'Galactic Storm' [last year's big Avengers' titles crossover] was the price of admission for me. Basically Nel said, 'You do these two issues and if I like the way you do those we'll keep you on the book.' So I did my best to write the two best issues of 'Galactic Storm' ever and that's how I got on the book – I bent over for 'Galactic Storm'!"

I'M LIKE A BABY LEARNING TO WALK! BUT I HAVEN'T TIME! I MUST LEARN QUICKLY! I MUST GET THE KNACK OF MANIPULATING THIS MASSIVE, UNBELIEVABLY POWERFUL IRON SHELL BEFORE THE REBELS FIND ME -- OR ELSE I'LL BE AT THEIR MERCY!
BUT THE BRAIN WHICH HAS MASTERED THE SECRETS OF SCIENCE IS ALSO CAPABLE OF MASTERING ITS NEW BODY! AND SO...
I HAVE THE FEEL OF IT NOW! I CAN STAND -- MOVE -- EVEN WALK WITHOUT TOPPLING!
MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE THE LOCKED DOOR...
BREAK IT DOWN! SMASH IT! I MUST LEARN WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THERE!
WHAM
WHA
MY BRAIN STILL THINKS! MY HEART STILL BEATS! BUT, IN ORDER TO REMAIN ALIVE, I MUST SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE IN THIS IRON PRISON!!
BUT, THIS BITTER REALIZATION IS SUDDENLY INTERRUPTED, AS THE IRON MAN SNAPS BACK TO REALITY...
THEY'LL SOON BE THROUGH THE DOOR... I MUST CONCEAL MYSELF UNTIL I CAN PLAN MY NEXT MOVE!

▲ *Iron Man's Origin*

Iron Man © *Marvel Entertainments Group*

Faced with such indiscretions, editor Nel Yomtov, a seventeen-year Marvel veteran with assorted Marvel and Epic titles under his editorial belt (*Avengers West Coast*, *Darkhawk*, *Sleaze Brothers*, *Mutatis* and *Wild Cards*) as well as a wide range of production and licensing experience, follows the lead of his dog-hating tempest-benders and abandons all pretence of creative unity.

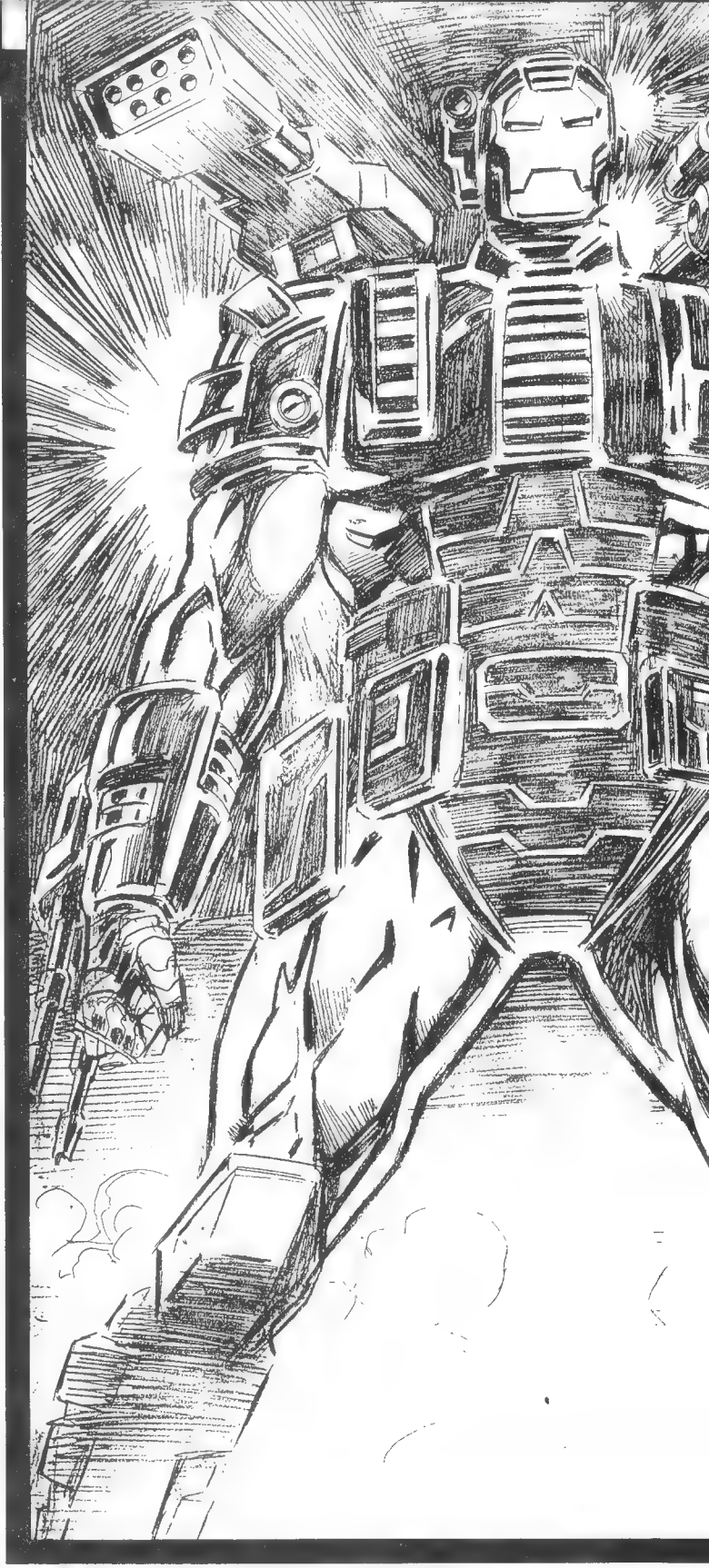
LANDMARK

1993 will be a landmark year for Iron Man and his alter ego Tony Stark. Not only has he just come back from cryonic suspension, but he has three anniversaries within a few months of each other: the 350th issue of his own strip (starting in *Tales of Suspense* 39), the 30th anniversary of his first appearance (March 1963) and the 300th issue of his own comic, celebrated in *Iron Man* 288, 290 and 300 respectively with the obligatory understated double-sized, foil-covered hoopla Marvel lashes out on such occasions.

Nel Yomtov would like to invest such big promotions with a little more than just cover tinsel, however: Tony Stark's resurrection was carefully timed to coincide with issue 290 and his full recovery looks destined for the Big 300. "Len wanted to extend the recuperating process of Tony past 300 but my feeling is that, if you're going to ask someone to plunk down extra money for a fancy cover, you better have something in that story that warrants it and not just the cover. So we decided that 300 will be the issue that he [Tony] comes back into the Iron Man suit." And what do you have in mind for the cover this time? "Right now it's a hologram that we have planned for that unless some new technique appears – we like to latch onto the latest craze!"

Trying to tie in the storylines to such events is difficult enough, but when you throw in a couple of crossovers, each of which takes two issues, then life becomes really complicated for the luckless writer. "Well, it's very, very difficult any time you're doing one of those crossovers," concedes writer Kaminski, "because you're really not writing anything resembling a story that comes from yourself. You're more typing somebody else's story and I personally don't care for it, but to a certain extent you've got to put up with it for the mainstream Marvel books. Right now we're trying to figure out exactly how we're going to interact with the *Infinity Crusade* this year, which is another whole can of worms. Not too long after that we're looking at the possibility of another big *Avengers* books crossover."

In between these storylines and issue 300, the creators plan to slot in Stark's gradual recovery from near-total paralysis, the resignation of James Rhodes, and some two- or three-part stories featuring some new villains. Kaminski names a few: the Terminator-like androids in issues 290 and 291, the new Controller ("he will be a wizened, shrivelled creature in a life support chair, much like Davros from *Doctor Who*") and, most significantly, a new villain called Vor/Tex. "Vor/Tex is an artificial intelligence that lives in the world's various network computer systems. Vor/Tex has become very curious about Tony Stark, because here is a human who is almost as smart as Vor/Tex is in many of the same technical and scientific ways. His plan has Stark running like a mouse through a maze to see what he'll do in various situations."



MASTERS OF SILENCE

Everything for the next few months leads up to the special issue 300. After that point though, the creators' plans are far from finalized, except when it comes to other Iron Man projects. The 1993 *Annual* will be built around a Masters of Silence yarn written by Kaminski ("I like them a lot, I'm hoping I can spin them off to a mini-series"). Besides featuring in the *Infinity Crusade* and the Avengers crossover, the Golden Avenger is also currently playing a part in Marvel UK's *MyS-TECH Wars* limited series.

But there is more, much more, to come. Later on in the year Yomtov promises "there's a good likelihood that we will be having a Walt Simonson bookshelf format one-off called *Iron Man 2020* – that's a character that appeared in the *Machine Man* mini-series a few years back. Probably around Christmas time there will be another Iron Man trade

paperback, reprinting four Doctor Doom stories." Most promising of all, however, "War Machine [James Rhodes in the black and white armour] will be getting his own ongoing title because there has been an incredible response to the armour and to the way Rhodes has been handled." As to another *Marvel Masterworks* (the 1992 one reprinted his earliest adventures from *Tales of Suspense*) or *Iron Annual* (out now), "we don't have any special projects along those lines planned."

What they also don't appear to have planned are any storylines for the regular comic after issue 300. Yomtov comes clean: "Beyond 300 I frankly don't know what we'll be doing." Kaminski does have one idea: "One thing I can give you for after 300 which is pretty definite will be Tony Stark dealing with the corruption in Stane Industries. He had reacquired Stane just before he die but he hasn't had a chance to do anything with it. What Stark is trying to do with Stark Enterprises is establish a multi-national corporation that is still run along moral lines. Probably after 300 I'll end up dealing wit that with him fighting with the people in charge over at Stane, trying to excise the corruption and establish it as a responsible business."

But surely Stark's near-death experience must have had some effect on the man's character and therefore the direction of the title? Yomtov reads my mind. "There has been a certain grimness that has pervaded all of comics for a few years now and, once Tony has healed, I would like to see a certain joy in the character of being Iron Man. He has sorely missed that. I would like to see him return in part to the smiling man about town, more towards the character that he originally was. It has been too long between serious romances. I'd like to see more of the playboy aspect of Tony Stark again, of the wealthy capitalist runnng a business, a woman on both arms (so to speak), charming and outgoing. Let's give the guy a break, essentially."

I'll drink to that. CW

...GOD HELP US BOTH!
YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR THIS, YOU KNOW
MY ARMOR SYSTEMS AUTOMATICALLY REBOOT 45 MINUTES AFTER EMP ATTACK!
...AND WHEN THEY DO I'M GONNA BEAT YOU TO A...
SAY GOD!
MY SYSTEMS RE BOOT AFTER SIX MINUTES

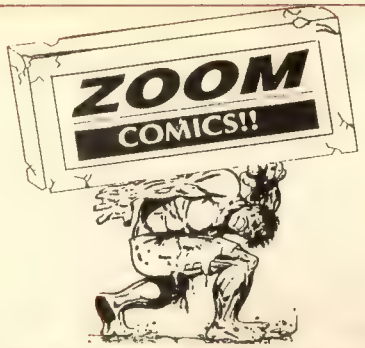
▲ *Iron Man vs. Firepower, art by Kev Hopgood/Mike DeCarlo*

TONY STARK

Tony Stark is one of Marvel's oldest, and at the same time most misused, characters. Once upon a time Tony Stark was Marvel's equivalent of Howard Hughes: a brilliant young inventor, head of Stark Industries and playboy multi-millionaire. His armoured alter-ego, invariably dubbed Shellhead or the Golden Avenger, was born in 1963 in the Silver Age of Comics, seemingly with a silver spoon in his mouth, in *Tales Of Suspense 39.* He was a founder member of the Avengers, providing the new team with a base (Avengers Mansion), a butler (Edwin Jarvis) and a bankroll, as well as his services as Iron Man. Later on he supplied weaponry for the original S.H.I.E.L.D. organisation. Apart from the near-fatal encounter in Vietnam which led to his donning his armour in the first place, Tony Stark seemed to lead a charmed life. Then it all went wrong.

Over the years he was stabbed, had a heart attack, shot, lost his fortune, had a heart attack, became an alcoholic, was paralyzed, had a heart attack, and most recently died – and was brought back to life. Along the way, and countless changes of armour later, he lost his girlfriends (shot, fled or turned bad – but no heart attacks at least), his fun and his way, as each writer on the book tried to outdo his predecessor by making Stark's life ever grimmer.

Despite all this, he overcame each personal tragedy and rebuilt his life (and his fortune) yet today Tony Stark remains a lone and somewhat unappreciated figure. He hasn't had a girlfriend in years, he appears to have no old friends apart from the Avengers and no confidantes at all other than James Rhodes. He possesses one of the keenest minds in the Marvel universe yet, unlike, say, Reed Richards of the Fantastic Four or Professor Xavier of the X-Men, no-one seems to realize it. Now he seems to be at a crossroads once again: will he go back to being the man he once was?



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FOR THE FACTS BEHIND THE FIGURES

MARVEL COMICS GROUP EDITOR BOB HARRAS HOLDS DOWN ONE OF COMICDOM'S MOST DEMANDING JOBS, PRESIDING OVER MARVEL'S EVER-EXPANDING EMPIRE OF MONEY-SPINNING MUTANT TITLES. FROM THE ORIGINAL **UNCANNY X-MEN** RIGHT THROUGH TO THE LATEST SPIN-OFF COMIC, **X-MEN ADVENTURES**, X MARKS THE SPOT – AND HE'S ON IT. THIS YEAR SEES THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THAT VERY FIRST **X-MEN** COMIC AND WHEN HARRAS DISCUSSED PLANS TO MAKE IT A PARTY TO REMEMBER, **COMIC WORLD**'S ALAN WOOLLCOMBE WAS HIDDEN INSIDE THE CAKE.

30 YEARS of MUTANT MAYHEM

The past eighteen months can't have been easy for Bob Harras. First of all the principal architect of the mutants' prolonged success, long-time X-scribe Chris Claremont, made his departure after sixteen years on the titles ("We agreed for Chris to leave for a while"). The sabbatical may take longer than Harras is prepared to admit: the writer himself told me a few months ago "it's highly unlikely that I'll be doing anything for that office in the foreseeable future."

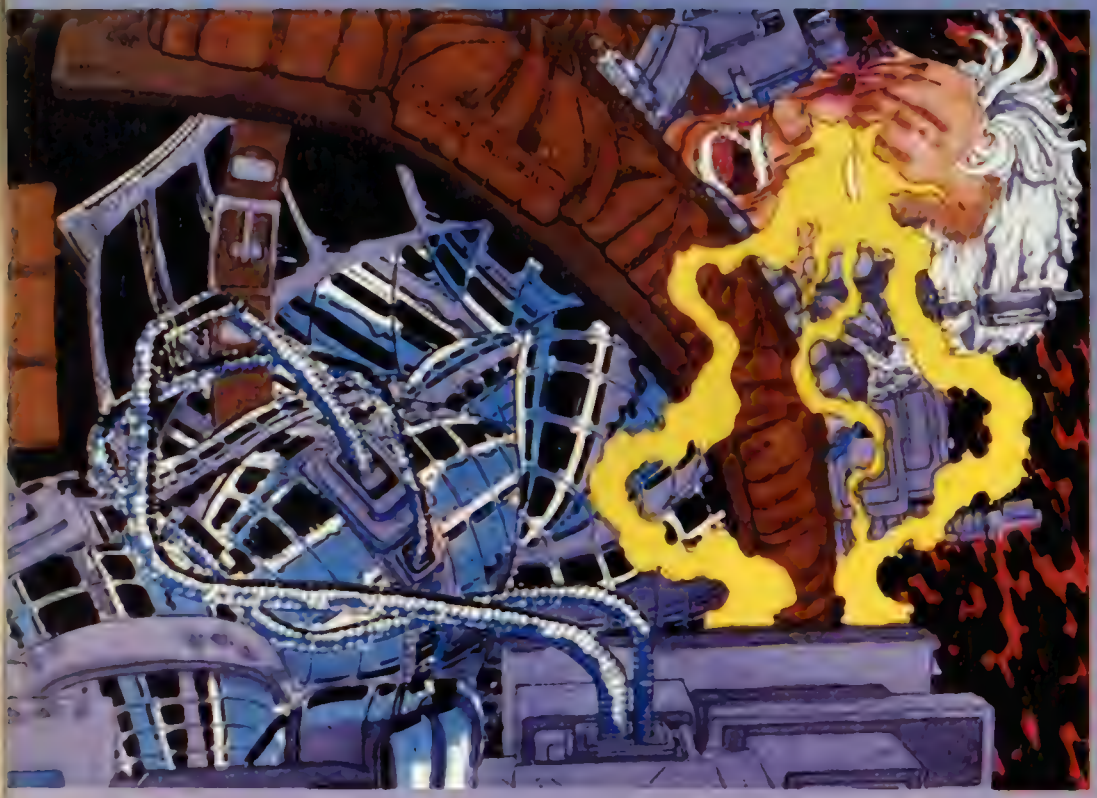
Next came – and went – maestro John Byrne: the ex-X-Men artist-turned-writer lasted barely three issues before jumping ship ("problems with the scheduling", according to Harras). Shortly thereafter, three 'name' artists (Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio and Rob Liefeld) hotfooted it from Harras's heroes to found rival comics publisher, Image. Anyone else in the editor's shoes might have been tempted to describe it as a difficult time.

Yet despite it all, Harras maintains an unflappable poise: whatever his feelings, not a word of criticism crosses the man's lips about Those Who Have Departed or even Those Who Have Set Up Shop In Opposition: "It's a friendly competition and I wish them luck," he says. Disagreements are minimised, conflicts buried, doubts erased: the past is gone, the future is assured, his manner seems to say. Nonetheless, the editor's ring of confidence cannot camouflage what must have been a three-aspirin headache for him: conventional wisdom has it that nothing kills readership loyalty faster than constant flux among the creators, so the mass defection of the creative mainstays from the flagship X-Men titles was a worst case scenario come true.

Harras downplays the downside: "What carries the books are the characters. When Jim (Lee) left *X-Men*, everyone thought 'Oh, my God . . .' about the sales dipping – but it hasn't happened yet. The artist and the writer are very important, no doubt about it, but the readers follow the lives of the characters and I think that's the real strength of the titles."

Nonetheless, permanent new creative teams were needed urgently for the comics, and if big names like Byrne couldn't be lured on board then there was more than sufficient local talent to fill the bill. "Right now we have four core writers on the X-Men: Larry Hama, Fabian Nicieza, Peter David and Scott Lobdell – Scott Lobdell will be concentrating on X-Men from now on, he will be dropping other stuff."

Post-Claremont and Lee, the Marvel mutant universe will be not so much creator-driven as editor-led, a point stressed by former writer Claremont himself as one of the factors that led to his decision to quit. Harras prefers to refer to it more as a joint enterprise: "I'm in charge of the plots, but to my mind everyone, including the penciller, has every right to have input on the storylines.



▲ *Cable*

X-Men © *Marvel Entertainment Group*

At plotting meetings the artists will be there and if they have a good idea we will be considering it. If it's great we will use it. My take is that you should never shut anyone out of the development of a book. If they care about the books and they have ideas, it can only strengthen the books if we have a collaborative effort."

Strip away such many-hands-make-light-work hyperbole, however, and it is apparent that all roads lead to Harras. "I'm a group editor. Underneath me now I have Kelly Corvese as a full editor – he's now handling *X-Factor* (as well as *X-Men Adventures*, *X-Men Classics* and *X-Men Chronicles*). I also have an associate editor handling some projects and an assistant, and Kelly has an assistant. Basically I am in charge of the X-Men books – even if Kelly edits an X-Men book, it still has to go through me for approval." In fact Harras aspires to more than just the policy maker/overseer role that senior editors have traditionally held. He would like to be Marvel's mutant *impresario* ("Bob Harras presents...") their master of ceremonies, and the next ceremony he wants to present is a biggie: the X-Men's 30th birthday bash.

30 NOT OUT

As an hors d'oeuvre, there are the ramifications of the just-concluded 'X-Cutioner's Song' crossover. "The events in 'X-Cutioner's Song' have set off a whole subplot that will affect all mutants for the next few years – there is a major change in the status quo for mutants which reinforces why there are X-Men."

▼ *X-Men*

▼ *X-Men Adventures*

why they get together. It also makes the world a more desperate place for mutants – they will be more of a tiny suppressed minority quite literally fighting for their lives. That will all build to the 30th anniversary."

Tantalising hints about the main course follow. "August is the actual anniversary date. We're planning a storyline involving all the main X-titles in a type of celebration of that anniversary. What will happen is that someone will return to the scene and cause great chaos for the X-Men – someone who is considered not with us at this point." Harras cannot bring himself to utter the scoundrel's name even though Marvel's advance publicity machine trumpeted the M-word (do you have to ask?) months ago.

And in case this intriguing banquet still doesn't grab you, there will be a death ("We will kill off a supporting character who has been around for a very long time") and betrayal. "One X-Man will betray the team, but it will be an event that will take Bishop completely by surprise. It will not be what he expects, so it is probably not the sequence he saw in the future."

So much for the main event, but the rumour mill has been working overtime of late about vast numbers of spin-off titles. Spin-doctor Harras pooh-poohs the notion, but will confirm five additions to the stable. "*X-Men Quarterly #1* will come out in March and is plotted by Scott Lobdell. The story focuses on three

Uncanny X-Men ◀

X-Men – Professor X, Scott Summers and Storm – surviving in the Arctic when they crashland there, being pursued by one of the new Upstart characters. Kerry Gammill is doing the pencilling and it's possible that Tom Palmer may do the inking."

The remaining four won't see the light of day before the middle of the year at the earliest, and the editor stoutly maintains an embargo on all but the barest essentials. Two are limited series: "*Deadpool* is coming out in June, with Fabian Nicieza writing it, new penciller Joe Madureira (who just did an issue of *Excalibur*) pencilling and Mark Farmer inking. Then there is *Gambit* coming out towards the end of the year. That has Howard Mackie as the writer, Lee Weeks as the penciller and we're still discussing who is the inker (it's too early for that)."

"ONE X-MEN WILL BETRAY THE TEAM, BUT IT WILL BE AN EVENT THAT WILL TAKE BISHOP COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE"

The other pair are regular monthly comics: "*Cable* is going to be an ongoing series – that will have Fabian writing it and Art Thibert on pencils. And we have a *Sabretooth* series coming out in the summer – that's Larry Hama writing and Mark Texeira will be the artist."

Harras has the politician's knack of answering questions in a way that can leave you no better informed than before. Broach the subject of the line-up of the teams and: "There will be some changes over the next year. We are talking now about making some changes in *X-Factor* but it's just in the planning stages, we are not definite about it. Changes will be dictated by what is coming, the events of the storyline." Well, that's cleared that one up.

However, try pinning him down on specifics, like reversing the controversial jumbling up of the 'old' and 'new' X-Men into the blue and gold squads, and you get a vigorous defence of a decision that still provokes letters over a year after the event. "I frankly was against the idea of always seeing Angel with Iceman and Beast, because that was what people expected to happen. I want to have these characters mix and match, I want to see Iceman and Wolverine get to know each other. That hasn't happened enough to my satisfaction, but I think if you always group the old five together it's just mundane and they're always going to be known as the old X-Men."

But, Mr Editor Sir, what about reuniting poor old Scott (Cyclops) Summers and Jean (Marvel Girl) Grey? (In a move that defied logic, emotion and characterisation, marvel's third oldest established couple were assigned to *different teams*.) The politician's non-committal response slips smoothly out: "Actually that was Chris (Claremont)'s idea. I wasn't entirely comfortable with that but Chris's point, which I agreed with up to a point, was to see how they acted. Everyone expected to get Scott and Jean together, so he wanted to try them in two separate books. They do appear in each other's books and we are maintaining the relationship, but a lot of people hate the separation. I don't know if it has worked and that could change."

Another startling truth emerges on the topic of costume changes: "I hate to admit this but costume changes are never really planned. I know Boomer in X-Force is getting a new costume, I believe we're maybe talking about modifying Cannonball's costume a little bit. I don't see any major costume changes coming but the X-Men just change automatically – basically, it's whatever the writer or artist feels like."

Similarly, on the merchandising and non-editorial aspects of the upcoming anniversary the mutant impresario denies all knowledge. Ask him whether there will be an *X-Men Marvel Masterworks* this year (a near certainty) or what other little anniversary goodies (a dead cert) will be flooding into the comic shops and he looks at sea, unless you count mutterings about a birthday logo and some special covers on the comics. Plausible enough, but all of a sudden the man looks very tired from the effort of deflecting questions – it has been a tough year for him and it shows . . .

With immaculate timing a willing minion moves in to save the editorial bacon. Young colourist Steve Buccellato earns his pay cheque with an impossible straight face: "Colouring *Wolverine* is the greatest thing that has happened to me. Really. Bob is like a father to me . . ." He falters. The newfound father figure in question is laughing his head off. CW

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BACK ON THE DE

THE NAME JOHN ROMITA IS A FAMILIAR ONE FOR MARVEL FANS. TWENTY-ODD YEARS AGO IT MEANT THE MAN WHO DREW SPIDER-MAN FOR MUCH OF THE '60S. THESE DAYS IT REFERS TO HIS SON, THE HOT ARTIST BEHIND DAREDEVIL, X-MEN AND THE PUNISHER FOR MUCH OF THE '80S. ALAN WOOLLCOMBE SPOKE TO HIM ON THE VERGE OF HIS RETURN TO PENCILLING UNCANNY X-MEN.

Mutant Liberation Front, from Cable

UKCAC is packing up all around us but John Romita Junior good-naturedly soldiers on chatting to fans and dispensing autographs way beyond the call of duty. Despite the lateness of the hour and his evident tiredness, he is friendly and open, with a cheery hail-fellow-well-met approach to all requests. It may be put on but I somehow doubt it.

Yet this is far more than some ambassador for clean living the Marvel way. This is the college graduate who joined Marvel in 1976 as a cover designer for their British reprint department. This is the penciller who made his name on *Iron Man* over a decade ago, starting with issue 115. This is the artist who was famous for his renditions of the *Uncanny X-Men* before Jim Lee was even drawing comics for a living. This is the illustrator whose artwork established the definitive current look for both *Daredevil* and *The Punisher*. This is the man with the Midas touch, whose instantly recognizable pencilling style has boosted sales on every title he has been associated with and who has won wide acclaim from the fans. Oh yes, and this is the man who is now back drawing the *Uncanny X-Men* (as of issue 298).

There is only one problem. The readers may like him, but he is convinced Someone Out There in the comic press has it in for him. Before I can get a word in edgeways, there is a mighty metaphorical gnashing of teeth at his detractors: "I have had a very bad experience with trade magazines or fan press in the States – they are very, very uncomplimentary to me. I've never gotten good reviews from any of them, yet I don't think that I've ever put out anything that has been so horrid that they can't say a decent thing about it. I guess my style isn't quirky enough for them or that they don't like me for some reason, but it's getting a little monotonous and I wish that they would at least be fair."

"I'M COMING BACK TO [X-MEN] BECAUSE I FEEL FRESHENED, I AM BETTER PREPARED ARTISTICALLY NOW"

Unfair, quirky, monotonous – yep, that can be the comics media all right *(Your fired – Ed)*, and just because the artist might be feeling a wee bit paranoid doesn't mean they haven't been sticking the knife in. JR Junior racks his brains for a reason and comes up with his father, JR Senior, the legendary 1960s *Amazing Spider-Man* artist: "Possibly they don't like me because they feel I got my job through my father, which is absolute nonsense – the truth of the matter is that he was actually *against* me doing comics work. But people will believe what they want to believe regardless of the truth and if they don't like my work there's nothing I can do about it. Opinions are like people's bums – everybody's got one, you know?"

THE X FACTOR

Ulp. On that bum note I can see this interview fast disappearing down the Swanee before it has ever begun. However, as abruptly as it started the ear-bashing stops and his bonhomie resurfaces. Thereafter Romita is courtesy personified – informative, unfailingly complimentary about his co-workers and enthusiastic about the projects he is involved in. There isn't the slightest edge

Cable vs Kane. All art © Marvel Entertainments Group

NA CHAIN GANG

or reserve to any of his pronouncements, and even his spontaneous combustion earlier seems more and more like an aberration motivated by genuine hurt and uncomprehension.

Clearly he is excited about his return to *Uncanny X-Men*. "I said I would never do it again because it was so difficult the first time I did it. I'm coming back to it because I feel freshened, I am better prepared artistically now than I was, and with Scott Lobdell writing the book there will be a fresh standpoint. Scott is a fine writer and it will allow us to do different things than we did ten years ago. That's exciting. Also, Dan Green will be inking and he's brilliant. He was the one that inked me on the *X-Men* before and it's a real pleasure to work with him again."

One aspect that Romita is particularly looking forward to is having a hand in the plotting. "I can help out the storylines which I wasn't able to do eight years ago. I do think I have a great imaginaion for storylines – my story designing and story ideas are exciting now because I seem to bring a cinematic feel to my work through being such a large film buff. I really get a kick out of creating new stories and new characters and with these characters there are still so many more things that can be done."

Like what? "We'll see what Scott thinks. In general I would prefer to leave the X-Men as a globe-hopping group. I think exotic locales are an excitement, an attraction for the fans. The Salem, New York mansion will still be there but I think they should have several different locations. I think something in Europe – the *X-Men* always seemed to have a European tinge to it. I like the fact that it's international, I think that's the freshness of the book and there's always extra characters that we can bring in.

"When John Byrne was thinking about writing the book for me," the artist adds by way of an afterthought, "he was considering bringing back the old standard X-Men – you know, Wolverine, Nightcrawler, Colossus and so on, his familiar X-Men. Now that he's not doing it and Scott is doing it, I don't know if we'll do any kind of shifting in the attendance."

MILLER TIME

The mutants will obviously be taking up the bulk of his time from now on, but Romita has not been idle elsewhere. His recent workload has included *Hearts Of Darkness* and *Cable* mini-series, plus a number of less definitive ventures: an unscheduled *Ghost Rider* project "but I don't think I'll be able to do that in '93", a putative *Silver Surfer* triology plotted by himself, and a would-be series (ongoing, limited, whatever) based on "a character I created called Shotgun that appeared in *Punisher: War Zone* and that I'm very proud of". But there are no prizes for guessing what his pride and joy is: a *Daredevil* graphic novel inked by Al Williamson and written by Frank Miller.

"It's a quality, quality story, it's amazing. It's one huge, self-contained, 145-page book. I did it with the sole purpose of doing it as a complete story, but they're probably going to produce it in four pieces and then as a complete book. I've never been so excited by a project before – it's probably the best thing I've done. I think working with Frank on this book was the highlight of my career to this point. I think he is *the* finest writer in the business. Storywise and dialogue-wise he is brilliant." The superlatives come tumbling out and are only checked when I ask him more about the book, whereupon he indicates that anything else he says about it is off the record. [At the time of writing Marvel/Epic had still to confirm format and release date details.]

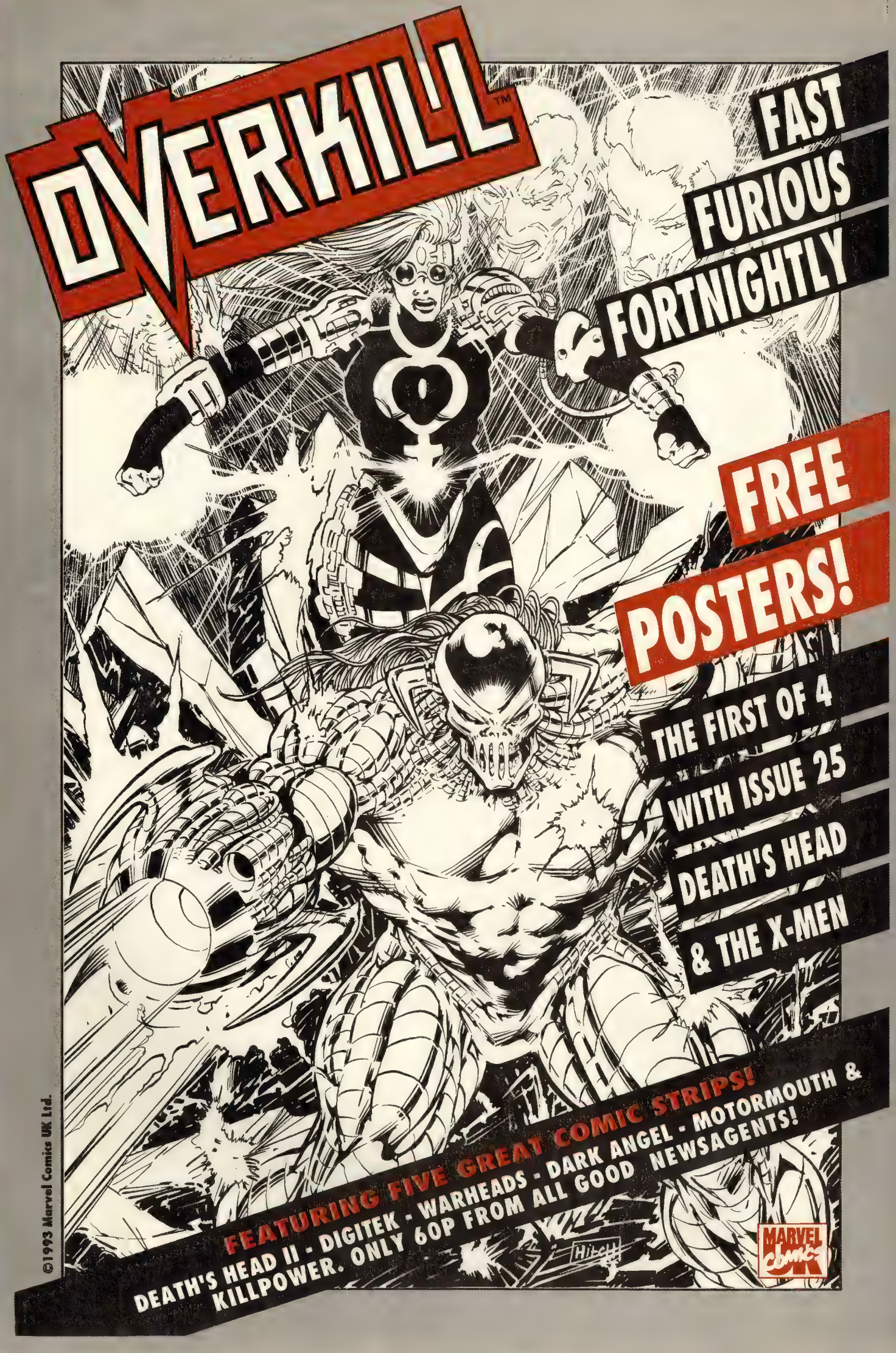
In certain respects JR Junior is a throwback to an earlier age of comics: in an era when comics creators work for any and all comic publishers (including their own) he has only ever worked for the family firm, as it were. "Marvel has always fulfilled my needs aesthetically, I guess you could say. I've never really wanted for anything with Marvel that they haven't given me if I've asked. They have taken good care of me and so I have no desire to go to any other comic book company."

Similarly, unlike many of his peers, he holds no ambitions to be a writer. "I don't have any desire to write – I do have a desire to plot and create stories but the writing, the dialoguing has no attraction to me. There are so many more eloquent people than me in the business that it is unnecessary for me to dialogue."

But before you entertain the idea that Romita's becoming modesty is merely a sign of limited vision, he does have wider horizons. Where most artists hanker after their name in lights as a writer, editor, publisher even, he dreams of a more traditional artistic way of life. "I love to paint impressionism. If I can get financially secure enough where I don't have to work regularly for a comic book company, I would like to sit back and do a painting every couple of months. I would do my impressionist paintings and get a gallery going. That's my ambition in life and I hope that in the next several years I make a good enough living that I can be comfortable that way. I can't wait."

And he signs another comic. CW

"MARVEL HAS ALWAYS FULFILLED MY NEEDS AESTHETICALLY . . . I'VE NEVER REALLY WANTED FOR ANYTHING WITH MARVEL"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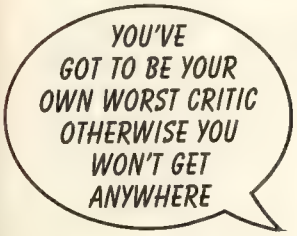
profiles

PETER DOHERTY



"I tried to get into comics a few years before, but I didn't get anywhere because my work was crap!" – Well, you couldn't accuse him of an inflated sense of self-importance. In the two years that he *has* been working in comics, Peter has not done badly. From a short story in the now defunct *Crisis*, he went on to work with John Wagner on one of the newborn *Megazine*'s most popular strips, Young Death, which was collected together by Mandarin as a graphic novel last September.

Since then, he has shifted venue to the Judge Dredd strip in *2000AD*, taking with him a vein of intense self-criticism, mixed with an enthusiastic interest in the mechanics of visual storytelling and a commitment to accurate anatomy and body-language that would warm the cockles of any traditionalist's heart.

"You've got to be your own worst critic – otherwise you won't get anywhere. If your work's selling, who's going to tell you to change? On 'Young Death', I took more and more time over the art. I'd sit down and look at my pages and at colour copies of previous episodes and ask myself, 'What am I doing wrong? What am I doing right?'. Then I'd try to improve on them in the next episode. I was doing that all through 'Judgement Day': trying out different techniques on different scenes, depending on what mood or effect is needed. Mind you, I still don't know what reproduces well and what doesn't!"

It might seem quite a leap, from five pages in *Crisis* to a twelve-part series starring a major Dredd-related character, but 'Young Death' is, essentially, a low-key, very sick little number. Peter's accurate, naturalistic treatment adds immeasurably to the effect. "The first script for 'Young Death' that I saw was not the one that was published. After spending the three weeks after Steve McManus accepted the short story for *Crisis* worrying about whether I'd get another job, I got this first version of the script. Soon after that, I got a message – it had to come through my parents, because we didn't have a phone – not to do anything! Steve told me that John was rewriting, so I got on with doing four pages of samples, which ended up as the last four pages of the first episode in *The Megazine*. The early pages of the original script became the back end of episode 2 and the beginning of episode 3."

Of his time spent studying design and animation at Norwich School of Art, Peter is less than complimentary – "On reflection, I should have sat in the Life Drawing Room for two years!" – but the influence of this period shows in the storytelling flow that he achieves in his work. He does admit to having a great deal of sympathy with any piece of art that sets out to tell a story:

"I'm not very interested in single images. I respond more to a story. Of the people whose work I like – Geoff Darrow, Moebius, Mike Kaluta-even their single images have a strong narrative feel to them. A panel by Geoff Darrow (of *Hard Boiled* notoriety) can be read as a single image, even though it's still part of a narrative – he always has these people in them, and they all have their own little stories.

"The other extreme is the approach of a minimalist like Hugo (*Corto Maltese*) Pratt. In his stories, the whole thing is much more important than any one image. That's the way I've heard Chuck Jones looks at animation: it's the finished piece that is important. You can have an individual painting, but an individual piece of animation could contain two thousand drawings."

Peter's first assignment on *2000AD* was the six-part 'Justice One' story, in which the flagship of the Justice Department's space fleet is hijacked by two of its crew members during a routine patrol. Dredd is sent to retrieve the ship. "I think, because my artwork on 'Young Death' was so dark, everybody figured that a 'Dredd in Space' story was the one for me!" Again, the story's focus is as much on the human-scale interaction of those who have stolen the space-shp as on he inevitable shoot-out among the stars with which it ends. How much of this is the result of the writing, and how much is due to Peter's artwork, is impossible to say, but the art brings out a lower-than-usual key in the story.

If 'Judgement Day' was anything, it was not low-key. In amongst the horde of zombies that threatened to take over the world was Sabat, the villain from the future who resurrected the dead, designed by Peter: "It was really nice seeing Carlos draw him. I think he does a really good version of the character."

Next up is another Dredd story, 'Mechanismo', written by John Wagner. "The story runs at a slower pace than 'Judgement Day', so I've got more room to create atmosphere and mood, which I'm enjoying. Colin (*America*) McNeil drew the first six episodes and I'm doing the last five, by which time Dredd has become a more central character than he is in the first part.

"My main problem is making my artwork look as good as Colin's!"

Simon Jowett

PAUL JOHNSON MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF WITH **LONDON'S DARK**, BACK IN 1989, ALTHOUGH HIS CAREER DATES BACK TO 1982 AND THE PUBLICATION OF **PSSST!** MAGAZINE. IN THE PAST DECADE HE HAS SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE AN INNOVATIVE AND COMPELLING ARTIST,

ANGELS &

HIS PAINTINGS GRACING THE PAGES OF **INTERFACE**, **THE BOOKS OF MAGIC** AND **HELLRAISER**. THIS MONTH SEES THE RELEASE OF BOTH **MERCY** AND **ALIENS: SACRIFICE** AND, AS WELL AS TWISTING HIS ARM TO PROVIDE A STUNNING COVER FOR THIS MONTH'S ISSUE, STEVE HOLLAND MANAGED TO SNATCH TWO HOURS OF HIS TIME TO DISCUSS HIS LATEST WORK...

Suddenly the apartment is thick with shades and echoes.

A caption from J.M. DeMatteis' final script for* Mercy *rather than a description of the public house in which our interview takes place, although the tape echoes with a chorus of girlish laughter from the corner of the bar as the early evening crowd begins to relax, away from their offices, away from their ringing telephones, only to be faced with two people poring over a portfolio, one providing a running commentary, the other hanging on every word.

"Here we go back to the Brooklyn apartment again," Paul reveals, turning the page. "Mercy manages to tempt the woman out onto the balcony. She looks down, but of course the demons are terribly angry at this, the window smashes out, they pull her back off the fire escape; there's a huge wall of screaming ghost faces."

And there is.

Turning the pages is Paul Johnson, the mild-mannered alter-ego of Paul Johnson the artist who has conjured up the demons. The man supping a Guinness displays a touch of Jekyl and Hyde: one minute it's walls of screaming faces, the next the almost romantic notion of an Earthbound demon, a tormented soul crying for release and being granted his wish. A cue for swelling music, violins and the choir invisible...

A gleam in the eye of our guide tells us that we may be seeing two sides of the same coin; Paul has hardly allowed himself to be typecast as any one brand of artist. His first widely seen work was the James Robinson written *London's Dark*, a war-time romance story told in black and white, although he had already self-published a number of titles, turned in stories to *Pssst!* in both mono and colour, and provided pencils for a short-lived independent monthly. After the war-torn romantic thrills of *London's Dark* came the frenetic colour of *Interface*, James Hudnall's *ESPers* teleported from Eclipse to Epic following the aborted John Burns series. The contrast couldn't have been greater.

From there he has carved himself a small niche within the world of fully painted horror, being the artist of the demonic *Hellraiser* vs *Nightbreed* war, *Jihad* (although his memories of the series are not fond ones), the final chapter of the *Books of Magic*, and a recent tale in the Clive Barker anthology, *Hellraiser*. To counter this, and to stop the niche from turning into a rut, he also provided *Crisis* with the touching 'Suddenly, Last Week...', and the energetic 'In Cages', the combined weight of which won him a Mekon award in 1992.

The rocky path from potential fine artist, respect within the community and an occupation your mother could tell her friends about, down to fine comic artist, respect within the comic community, and an occupation your mother thought you'd grow out of began, of course, with the discovery of comics at the age of seven: "I have one of those sickly child stories," says Paul, "Once, when I was ill with chicken pox and my brother was at school I snuck into his room and was looking at his books, and there was this big drawer full of comics which I started reading – and haven't stopped since. I still have them, in fact – early *Green Lantern*, *Flash*, *The Atom*, *Justice League America*, that sort of thing. No Marvel; I didn't discover those until the 1970s.

"I was always interested in reading them, and started copying the drawings and its been a long spiral down from there."

Despite the predilection for superheroes at an early age, the nearest he has come to painting costume-dramas

was *Interface*, where the superpowers were (literally) all in the minds of the characters. Paul's brand of painted artwork – and that of other painters – lends itself to horror better than heroics. It's all a matter of pace, he says:

"I think the main reason why painters don't work the superhero material is speed of reading. Superhero comics are action comics and tend to be pretty fast-paced, whereas painted artwork, because of the way it's being used, tends to slow you down when you're reading it: you want to look into it to see what's going on. It's much more of an illustrational way of portraying something, so I think maybe it doesn't suit superheroes. That's not quite true because Sienkiewicz's style is ideally suited to superheroes."

Artists often rely on the hard edges of cartoons to allow readers to instantly understand a page, to help the eye travel at the high speed required by your average superhero slug out. "Plus superhero work tends to rely on a lot of distortion," adds Paul.

Or is it just the inability of some artists to draw anatomy?

"Oh dear. You're obviously very bitter and twisted!"

MERCY

Moving on quickly. "I was involved in *Pssst!*, I had a bunch of things appear in there. It was a real shame actually because I did loads of work and they were just going to run my stuff monthly when the magazine folded. I'd done virtually 100 pages of fully painted work even back in those days, a bunch of adventure stories and some arty things as well."

From *Pssst!* Paul moved into self-publishing, and returned to colour only when his work began to appear in America, home to one of his two current projects.

Mercy was first announced for the Disney controlled Touchmark line edited by Art Young, but moved to DC when Disney decided to concentrate solely on its juvenile titles. Now, as one of the early offerings of the impressive Vertigo line it has already garnered some favourable reports based solely on the two-pages which appeared in the *Vertigo Preview*, although the spread reveals little about the story, and doesn't give much of a clue as to the identity of the bitter man attached to reality by an umbilical cord, or what Mercy is.

So what is Mercy?

"To say what Mercy is you really have to read the book, because the whole story is about finding out what Mercy is. The story is told from the viewpoint of a guy called Joshua Rose who's a very rich man in a coma stuck down here on Earth unable to move, but his spirit is moving above the Earth and from that vantage point he can see that there's this force that runs through people and he wants to know what it is and starts following it; he finds it personified in this character which he calls Mercy – a kind of angelic spirit who enters into people's lives when they need help.

"It was very, very loosely written – it would be kind of: 'pages 1-4, blah, blah, blah happens' and from that I did a set of breakdowns which I sent to Mark [DeMatteis]. We talked it over, made some alterations, then I did the artwork."

Quite the Marvel method of doing things. Is that the first time you've worked that way?

"It is, actually. Up until then everything I'd done had very tight scripts."

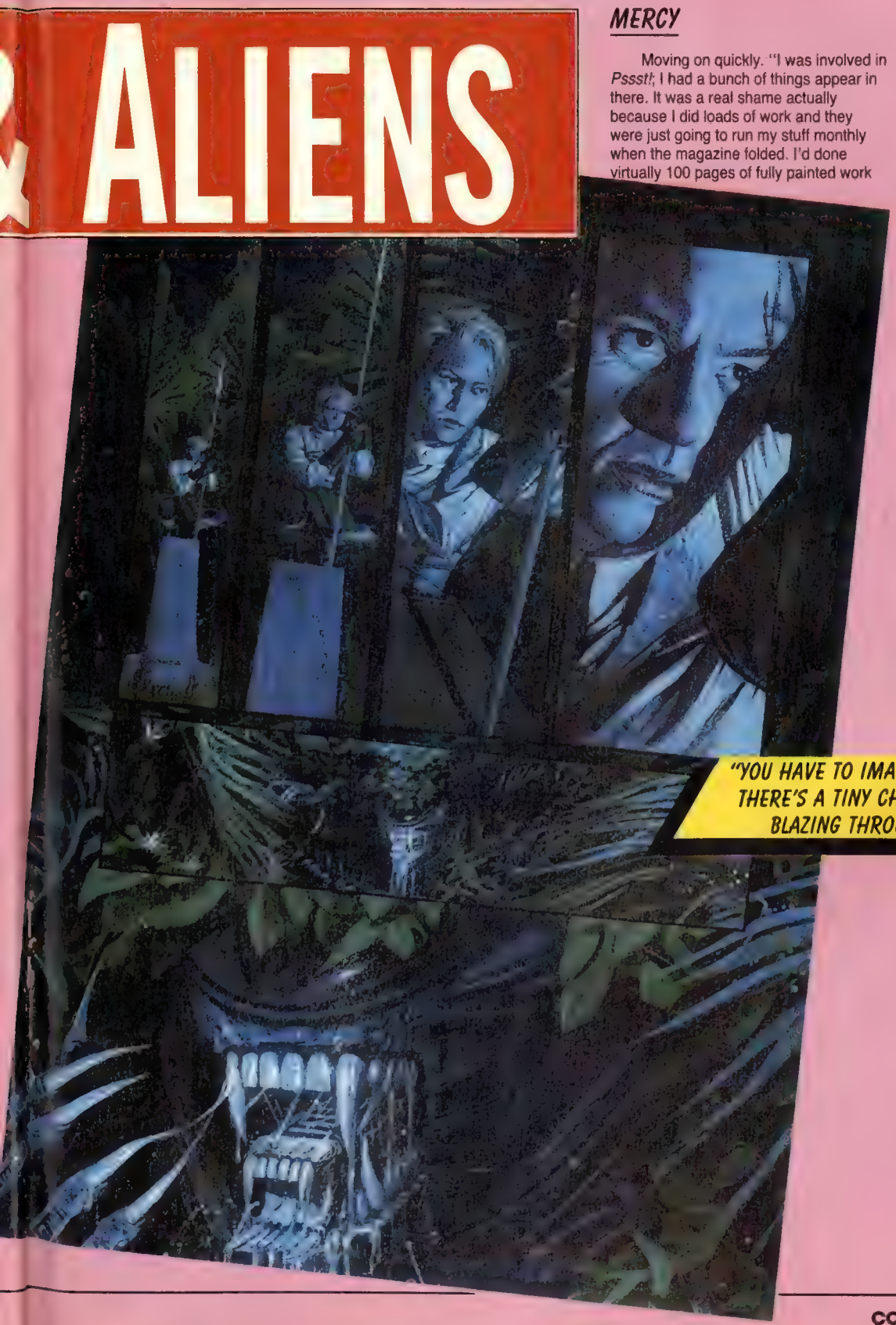
With that freedom there must have been a temptation to really go to town?

"Yeh. The two projects I've done recently, *Aliens* and *Mercy*, have both been quite different in that the *Aliens* is very controlled, so I've had to be very controlled in the way I've used the paint; *Mercy* has been quite an explosive, energetic story, so I've been able to throw things around and try unusual breakdowns.

"Also Pete's script is so tight there was just no point in trying to break away from it and become overly expressive with the artwork. The script was so good I just had to stick to it and the story came out fine.

"When Touchmark was first announced and we had to do promotional work for *Mercy*, the story hadn't even been written, so the artwork done then bares no resemblance to the actual story that emerged." The move from publisher to publisher posed less of a problem than I had imagined.

"I work pretty steadily anyway. I tend to do three painted pages a week, so I



"YOU HAVE TO IMAGINE THAT IN THIS DARK EDGE THERE'S A TINY CHINK, AND COLOURED LIGHT IS BLAZING THROUGH. IT'S CALLED MERCY!"

...ANGELS & ALIENS

Mercy © J.M. DeMatteis

Aliens © Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

just kept on chugging along because I knew somebody would be interested, and DC were most definitely interested..."

With no dodgy panic stories to get my reporter's teeth into, we take a look at the story. There's a bewildered silence from the group at the next table as we begin to explore the ethereal world inhabited by Mercy and the spirit of Joshua Rose...

"That's Joshua Rose...Joshua is in bed, dying slowly. He's being kept alive, although he desperately wants to die. He's a very bitter, very cynical man. But his spirit is in fact drifting off into the netherworld populated by various other dying people. We see him looking down towards the Earth, and he sees Mercy again – he sees this woman helping someone in India, and it sparks a memory that he keeps seeing this person all over the world, in New York, in London, in China...sometimes she's old, sometimes young, sometimes she's black, sometimes white, or Chinese. Mercy can be any racial type.

"MERCY HAS BEEN QUITE AN EXPLOSIVE, ENERGETIC STORY, SO I'VE BEEN ABLE TO THROW THINGS AROUND"

"He's seen her before. It's described that she moves like a wind through people's lives, and Joshua can't understand what she is, so he's trying to hunt her down. She forms out of the cosmos in her prime state and we see her forming and then going down to Earth to go and help someone else.

"So we see Mercy as she moves through a couple of different people's lives: one story concerns a married couple living in Richmond who are overmortgaged, having marital problems, it's very bad, and hatred is building up into a monster which is actually becoming real. Mercy confronts this young monster as it tries to get hold of the couple's young daughter and warns it not to do anything, then disappears...

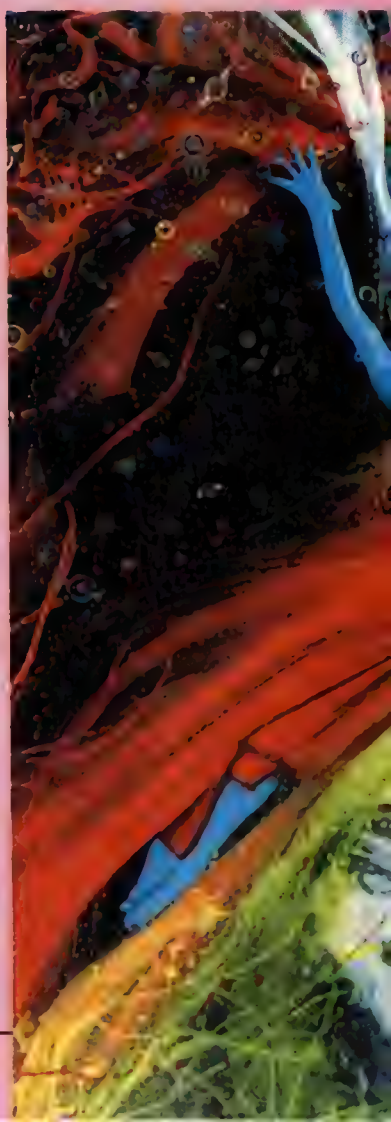
"We suddenly become aware of her somewhere else, we don't know if it's simultaneous or later or whatever. We meet a young boy running through the Amazonian rain forest; he's frightened and scared because he's going through an initiation ceremony and he doesn't know what to do. He knows that it's something terrible and something to be feared...

"So he prays, he does a small ceremonial dance and lays down to rest, and in his dreams Mercy comes down to him and dances with him and gives him confidence to go and face the trials ahead.

"The final main thread of the story concerns a black woman in Brooklyn who is trapped in her apartment with photographs of all her relatives and dead friends. She's been haunted by these memories that won't let her out – she has to stay locked in this room in the dark – and Mercy comes once a week to have tea and biscuits with her and chat with her and try to persuade her that it's time to go out, which may seem crazy, but when you're living in a world full of ghosts anyway, someone with bright blue skin and flowing red and yellow robes isn't going to seem out of place."

The three threads of the story are linked by images of Joshua Rose floating, disconnected and confused. Still unable to understand the nature of Mercy, he watches her as she fights the demon in the Richmond household, tempts the boy undergoing his initiation into the ceremonial fires, and the woman from Brooklyn takes her first step towards freeing herself from the ghosts of her past. To reveal any more would require a spoiler warning, and I'm not about to shed any more light than is revealed to poor, cynical, Joshua, although it becomes apparent that his obsession is not necessarily an angel of mercy. "It's not obvious what her motivations are," is Paul's canny response. You'll just have to find out by reading the book.

Where, then, does *Mercy* fit the new mature reader Vertigo line? "It's more



optimistic than so much of the stuff that you read – 'how many people can we kill, how many people can we degrade...'"

Last month I called the line the Dark Edge of mature reader titles. "You have to imagine that in this dark edge there's a tiny chink, and coloured light is blazing through. It's called *Mercy*!"

SACRIFICE

At the other end of the scale is *Aliens: Sacrifice*, the first British originated Alien spin-off to be produced by Dark Horse International or to be serialised in the British *Aliens* magazine. Written by Pete Milligan, the story concerns Ann McKay, the sole survivor of a spaceship that crashes on a planet inhabited only by a small farming community. Or is it?

"I don't know how much to tell you without giving it away," is Paul's opening shot when I question him about the plot to what he has already described as the tightest written story he has had to illuminate.

"As she's escaping from the burning wreck and staggering towards civilisation she thinks she sees an alien. which everybody denies. But as the plot unfolds we find out that there is indeed an alien on this planet which for some reason the inhabitants refuse to talk about.

"And, of course, Ann is determined to find out what it's doing there and why everyone is so secretive about it. I can't tell you any more because it will reveal the whole plot, but there's lots of twists and turns, and it's a really excellent script, one of the best I've ever worked from.

"People expecting a run of the mill Aliens story might be disappointed because the way that the original *Alien* movie worked is that the alien was kept very much in the background and it was frightening due to its absence. This is the way that Pete's handled his story also – you know the alien's there, but you don't really see it that much, which makes it more frightening."

We move on. Most of Paul's work over the past few years has been in colour. Isn't there an urge to change pace sometimes and return to good old monochrome? The question wasn't even a set-up, but it co-incidentally introduces two forthcoming projects into the conversation: "I'm going to be doing two series in black and white: one for DC which is called *The Fires of Alchemy*, a twelve issue mini-series written by Dick Foreman with painted covers by me, and I'm doing a 4-issue mini-series for Marvel UK called *Children of the Voyager* with Nick Abadzis. 'Voyager' in big letters, 'Children of the' in little letters."

You could almost believe it's a superhero title! "Well, it's not. It was called *He Who Walks* until last week."

Which subtle link brought our conversation to a close. *He Who Walks* became we who walked. Well, as far as the nearest taxi anyway. CW

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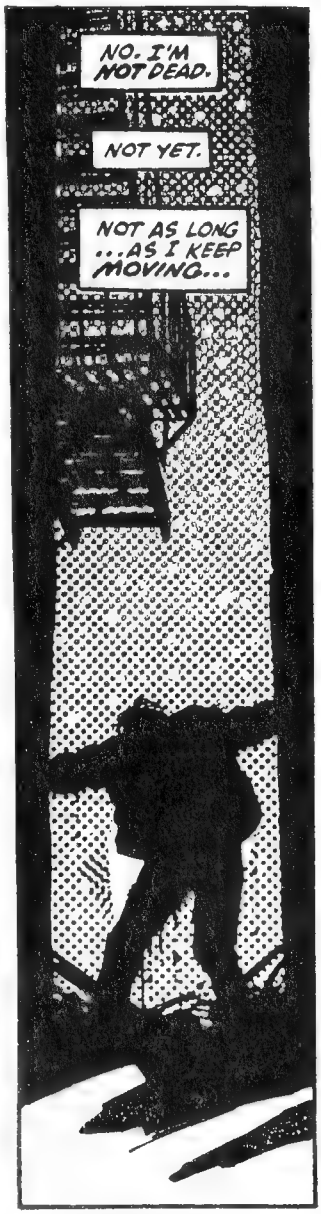
Mercy (in *Mercy*, Mar 1993, by J.M. DeMatteis)
Aliens: Sacrifice (in *Aliens 9-13*, Mar-Jun 1993, by Peter Milligan; reprinted in *Aliens: Sacrifice*, May 1993)

BACK IN MAY 1984, DAVID MAZZUCCELLI STARTED HIS FIRST LONG STINT ON A MAINSTREAM COMIC WHICH PROVED SO POPULAR, BY THE TIME HIS TENURE ON MARVEL'S DAREDEVIL ENDED, HE WAS RECEIVING FAN MAIL HERALDING HIM AS THE "NEW FRANK MILLER". INDEED FRANK MILLER HIMSELF SAW SUCH POTENTIAL IN MAZZUCCELLI THAT HE TEAMED UP WITH HIM TO PRODUCE A COLLABORATION SO SUCCESSFUL THAT THEY MANAGED TO TAKE THEIR CREATIVE FRISSON AND TRANSFER IT OVER TO ANOTHER COMIC TITLE AND COMPANY AND REPEAT THE SAME FORMULA ON DC'S BATMAN, RE-WRITING THE DEFINITIVE ORIGIN OF THE DARK KNIGHT.

TWO GIANTLY SUCCESSFUL RUNS ON MAJOR TITLES FOR MAJOR MAINSTREAM COMIC COMPANIES, THEN SUDDEN SILENCE. WHAT HAPPENED TO DAVID MAZZUCCELLI?

RUBBER Blan



▲ *Daredevil*

***Not a word was heard of him until suddenly in 1991 he re-emerged, transformed like some bizarre insect from a four year coccoon. And what a transformation! His work at first glance seemed completely unrecognisable to the work seen in his mainstream superhero comics. He has now taken on the mantle of an alternative comic creator, self-publishing his own very private and personal world called* Rubber Blanket.**

In order to understand Mazzuccelli's creative transformation, not just his most recent, but his constant rapid development from his first work on *Daredevil*, through *Batman Year One* to today, it is important to understand his art background.

For a number of years Mazzuccelli studied fine art at college with a dwindling childhood interest in comics like *Batman*, sparked off by the television series, behind him. So there was always a frustration right from the start that his interests in comicbook illustration and his love for fine art were divided.

When Frank Miller's run on *Daredevil* began to receive widespread attention, Mazzuccelli's interest in the medium was re-kindled after being shown some examples of Miller's work by an art college room-mate.

"That was the stuff that really got me excited about comics again. When I first got the job drawing *Daredevil*, I was very conscious of the fact that he (Miller) really made a mark on the book, so I tried really hard not to do a 'Frank Miller Daredevil'. I tried to find my own way of doing it. Because I knew everyone that had came on the book after Frank left was compared to Frank; I almost turned the book down for that reason."

Mazzuccelli's artwork on *Daredevil* improved in leaps and bounds from issue to issue, but when Miller took over the books writing chores, Mazzuccelli seemed to suddenly explode with ideas and frenetic artwork. Inevitably, Mazzuccelli's art in places was reminiscent of Miller's drawing style. But was this down to Miller's plotting or was he providing layouts?

"I don't really see it the way some people see it, but I think that maybe what is the biggest difference was that he was writing *full* scripts. He was writing panel by panel, so that probably set the pace for it.

"When I started working for Frank, I had just come back from a long trip living in Europe, mostly in Italy. Working on the book at the time and also looking at a lot of art, I was getting influenced by a lot of different things. When I came back to the States I was really eager to take my work and propel it ahead into something else. The timing was just great.

"The way we worked was good. We would basically talk about the plot together. Usually Frank had the initial idea and then I would work out some ideas with him. Then he would write a full script and when I got it I'd call him up and we'd talk again. For the most part he thought I had a strong enough sense of storytelling to want to let me tell it the way I could do it."

So undoubtedly, Mazzuccelli's artwork and storytelling was developing and improving at a fair speed, but exactly where was it developing? What were his aims?

"I've always believed in trying to draw stories in the most appropriate way to tell them. When I took over *Daredevil*, I looked back at a lot of the history of Daredevil to try and see where this character was coming from, and what did I like, and what kinds of things would influence me about the character. Same thing with Batman. I went back and looked at the first year of Batman stories and thought about the different changes he'd been through. Also, I really wanted to take my own style in more of a simplified direction. I made a very conscious effort to do a very different look than Batman had had for years. I think Neil Adams had set the tone for the Seventies and the Eighties and that was not a Batman I was interested in drawing.

"I started trying to remember what I liked about cartooning and about comics in the first place. One of the things is that it really is a shorthand form of reality. It's really about telling a story from panel to panel, not necessarily about making single, individual, beautifully rendered drawings that hold you too long in one place. If you can describe everything you want in as few lines as possible, I think that's more about the magic of drawing."

"WHEN I FIRST GOT THE JOB DRAWING DAREDEVIL . . . I TRIED REALLY HARD NOT TO DO A 'FRANK MILLER DAREDEVIL'"

RUBBER BLANKET

But still Mazzuccelli had a problem with the rift between the comicbook work he was doing and his love of fine art, books and cinema.

"I actually had to take a little time off when I finished *Batman* to think about what I wanted to do with comics. So for about two years I didn't do any drawing at all, which I could afford to do because I had worked with Frank Miller on two very successful projects."

"I wanted to see if I could get my own interests into comic stories and tell

Daredevil © *Marvel Entertainments Group.*
Batman © *DC Comics Inc.*
Rubber Blanket © *Rubber Blanket Press*

Photo by Joe Zattere

them in a fresh way. Part of that was discovering a lot of the alternative comics and seeing what people were doing, part of it was getting back to drawing not for comics and doing some printmaking. I did some colour lithography which I had never done before and that got me interested in making work specifically for the printing process. When I came up with my first story post-mainstream, which is 'Near Miss' in *Rubber Blanket* number one, it didn't seem to me too many places at the time were handling material of that kind. I really wanted it printed in two colours, the way that we eventually did it, so the only alternative seemed to be self-publishing."

So what does the unusual choice of title for his own very first book mean?

"We're getting people assuming it's got sexual connotations to mental institutions, and I'm not unhappy with any of those. In offset lithography, which is the way the book is printed, the plate never touches the paper. So it leaves a very crisp image and it preserves the plate longer. It's a very common printing process that's used for most printing as far as I know these days. So when we were trying to think of a name for the book, we wanted something that reflected what the book was about as well as having a nice ring to it and lots of different allusions."

▲ Batman: Year One

Comparing *Rubber Blanket* issue one to the second, even here Mazzuccelli is still developing rapidly. His interest in German Expressionist art is coming through as his figure drawings become very stylised mannequins with angular limbs and features, but his ability to instill them with life and a sense of strong depth and dynamic perspective roots them firmly in a believable universe.

▲ *Rubber Blanket*

"[CARTOONING AND COMICS ART] REALLY IS A SHORTHAND FORM OF REALITY. IT'S REALLY ABOUT TELLING A STORY"

His most successful and visually stunning story so far is 'Discovering America' in the new issue of *Rubber Blanket* which takes his aforementioned use of separate plates for each colour on 'Near Miss' a step further. Here he uses two colours and where they overlap it forms a third which creates such an astonishing sense of depth, it arguably blows away virtually any full-colour comicbook work you could care to mention.

"I'm very excited about what the third issue of *Rubber Blanket* is going to be like which I've already started thinking about. I've got at least one story almost completely worked out in my head and I think that will be pretty strong. I'm very interested in exploring different ways of telling stories. I tend to think more laterally than linear. On the other hand I don't necessarily want to purposefully confuse or obscure. So it's like walking a tightrope where you want to be accessable enough that people are interested to read the work and yet still keep that balance that I'm interested in having. A tension."

Robin Cowings

CELEBRATING IT'S SIXTEENTH ANNIVERSARY IN FEBRUARY, 2000AD HAS THREE NEW STRIPS LINED UP FOR WHAT THEY'RE CALLING THE 'SPRING OFFENSIVE', BEGINNING PROG 928. COMIC WORLD SPOKE TO THARG'S BUSY DROIDS TO DISCOVER WHAT NEW LEVELS OF THRILLPOWER WERE ABOUT TO BE UNLEASHED ON UNSUSPECTING EARTHLES...

Firekind art by Paul Marshal

Bad Company art by Brett Ewins/Jim McCarthy

Pete Milligan's cordless telephone crackles in a kitchen in London, and a tape recorder in Colchester eats up his every word, a small miracle of acoustics, micro-electronics and magnetic recording. A second tape is uncovered, and the inevitable rash of rumours begins to spread: what are the revelations of the secret recordings the yellow press have dubbed '2000ADgate'?

Many and varied. Firstly that however miraculous modern technology may appear, it can still go wrong. Batteries that can keep a rabbit canoeing into the sunset die at the first ring of a telephone, and a well established time-table means nothing when it comes to actually running a train on time. Even the least paranoid man could easily begin to feel the ghostly fingers of conspiracy tugging at his coat-tails...

...in bad co

Capping it all, Tharg keeps an alien eye over our conversation from the top of a cupboard...

Richard Burton, editor of the conveniently alliterative Galaxy's Greatest, offers a mild rebuke to my comment that everyone has the occasional poke at *2000AD* for the number of artists they showcase for American publishers, and waves a magazine under my nose. "Have you seen this?" he asks. "A feature on how Mega-City is happening now. There's even a league table of top cities and what their population will be by the year 2000 Tokyo – 28 million!"

"BAD COMPANY WAS NEVER JUST ANOTHER WAR STORY" PETE MILLIGAN

Art © Fleetway Editions

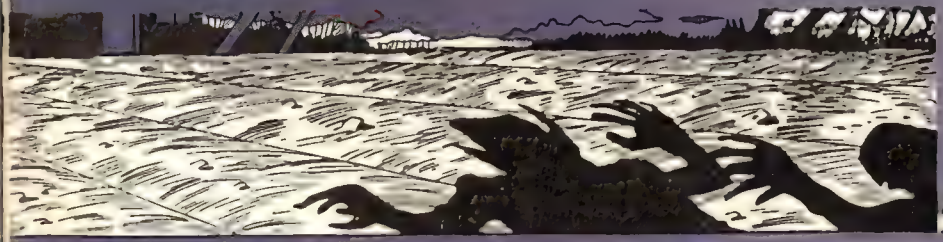
The relevance escapes me momentarily until we reach an article further into the same issue. "There's a feature on motor-racing," hints Richard. "It's about how Britain builds the best racing cars in the world. That applies to comics as well, we've got the knack of producing talent."

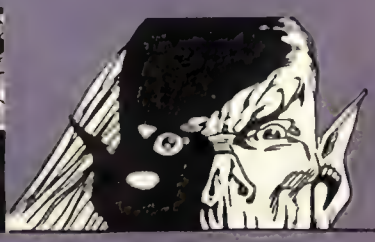
Subtly, Burton has just heaped a large pile of praise on his writers and artists, something editor's aren't best known for *(I'm fired, too – Ed)*. So how have things been going recently?

"Terrific. We're still trying a bit of everything. 'Finn' has been the runaway success in terms of new characters. The second story's written and being drawn by a brand new artist, Paul Staples, and he's doing a great job so far.

"Dredd is still far and away the most popular character. It just shows his staying power, and there's lots of things happening with Dredd, there's more interest in America now *(see News)*: at the moment we're still cleaning up after Sabat in both publications, mine and Dave [Bishop]'s *Megazine*. The judge strengths are down and they're having a tough time."

Reader popularity is responsible for the return of two strips in the spring promotion prog. The *Megazine* offers us a tenuous link to steer our conversation back on course, when the idea of a solo Judge Dredd comic was first discussed back in 1984 one of the proposed strips was 'Bad Company', at the time a John Wagner/Alan Grant creation. The idea for the comic was spiked because of the high





"IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE ONE OF THOSE EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS NOVELS, SORT OF 'MUSCLE MEN OF MARS' WITH DRAGONS" JOHN SMITH

ompany

cover price it would have required (45p!), but the future war story wouldn't go away and was put in the hands of Pete Milligan, then fresh off the 'Tharg's Future Shocks' treadmill and with only one series, 'Sooner or Later', under his belt for *2000AD*. The art team united Brett Ewins and Jim McCarthy for the first time, Brett already a *2000* stalwart of some years.

The combination was dynamite. The serial began in the landmark Prog 500 and promptly knocked Dredd off the top of the readers weekly poll. McCarthy's rugged inking over Ewins' pencils matched the latter's claim that he was aiming at something like "Frank Miller meets Battle Picture Library, very gritty and very black". When Kano said "Krool don't understand the concept of peace...to defeat them you must wear their skins," you could feel your flesh creeping out of the room to hide.

"Bad Company was never just another war story, never a typical *2000AD* war story," says Milligan. "It had more depth than that. It was always about real people who fought in war, so I'm trying to carry that forward a bit. It was fun doing it, and fun teaming up with Brett and Jim again.

"You can't just go back and do the same story again. I always felt there was a bit more mileage in Kano, because he was such a good character, so this is a Kano-centric story rather than just Bad Company – but we've stayed true to it."

"I've just finished the last episode," reports Brett Ewins. "It's been, what four, five years, so it's quite a welcome return. It was a great strip to do, because Kano's such an imposing character."

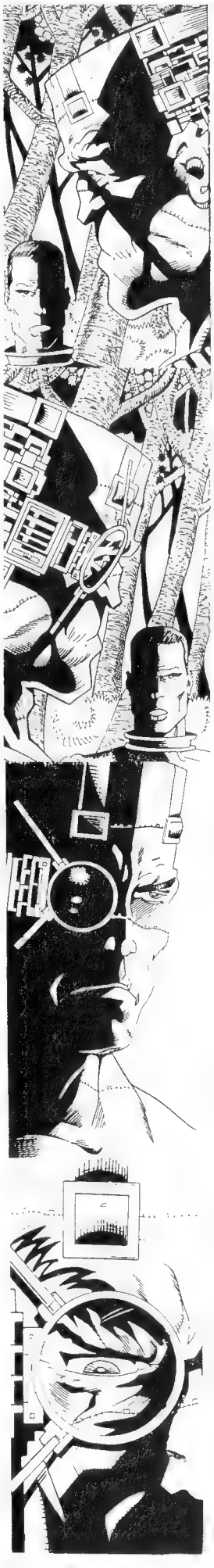
The new tale takes up the thread of Kano's life some years after the events of 'The Krool Heart'. For newcomers to the series, Bad Company were a rogue outfit first seen of the planet Ararat, fighting the Krool – incomprehensibly war hungry alien horrors. Kano, the leader of Bad Company, was a veteran commander of 19th Division whose men were massacred when Kano allowed Krool to be taken prisoners; captured and experimented on, one half of his brain replaced with that of a Krool warrior. Kano was without emotion when it came to killing Krool or using humans as bait.

The original company was made up of Thrax, Mad Tommy, Shrike, Dogbrain, Flytrap, Joe Scummer, Stitches, Wallbanger, Gobber and Malcolm, the story told through the diary of Danny Franks, raw recruit of 1st Colony Division who are saved from slaughter by Kano's company.

The original Bad Co. were wiped out almost to a man as the story progressed, some at the claws of the Krool, others at the business end of Kano's rifle. Kano's only concern was protecting a black box which he thought contained the other half of his brain.

Milligan, Ewins and McCarthy charted the Company's progress through the pages of *2000AD* between 1986 and 1988, through two incarnations of the team, but the new series sees the return of the original team in an unexpected way:

Armoured Gideon art by Simon Jacob



"It focuses on Kano," reveals Milligan. "It's a few years after the war and Kano's on this planet with his wife and child, trying to lead a quiet life, but his past catches up with him with unusual results..."

"The farm he occupies there is attacked by Franks – Krool rejects who have been experimented on," continues Ewins. "They attack the farmhouse, and Kano falls back to his old ways because his wife and child are threatened. The planet seems to give back to people that which they've lost, and it gives back Bad Company to Kano because that's what he wants most.

"Thrax, Malcolm, Mad Tommy, Stitch, Joe Scummer, they're haunting him as ghosts, but they change to human form on this strange planet..."

The story will be the first to appear in colour, on which subject Milligan replies, "I wait with baited breath, actually," to my question. "I always thought the early Bad Company's looked very good in that gritty black and white, but I think Jim McCarthy, particularly, liased with Gina Hart, who's doing the colouring.

"It's quite a simple story," he says, adding, "but I think it's the kind of story that's going for a lot more emotion and passion than the average *2000AD* story; it's not just a war story: it's going to have a lot more emotional depth. There are a few emotional wells that we plumb."

ARMOURED GIDEON

"Armoured Gideon was a very popular character on its first outing," reveals Richard Burton. Tharg smiles enigmatically from his hiding place above us, attracting the attention of Gideon scribe John Tomlinson as he marvels at The Mighty One's latest offering, destined for the next Special. John offers a compliment to the boss about the script, as all good droids should.

So what about Armoured Gideon, John?

"Basically he's a giant robot demon-buster created countless centuries by a race of Godlike beings called The Silent Ones – we don't know much about them, although I may go into more detail at some point. Gideon inhabits this H.P. Lovecraft dimension full of demons and ghosts; his task is to keep them where they are, and prevent them slipping through the portals to Earth.

"The hero is a psychic photographer – someone who can think images onto film – and he's the only one who's able to take pictures of this Gideon creature and his demonic charges, so his pictures become quite sought after by the media – and by Gideon who doesn't want to appear on film.

That's pretty much sums up the first series which appeared back in 1990. There have been a couple of one-off tales since then, the bulk of the stories drawn by Gideon co-creator Simon Jacob, noted for his intricately cross-hatched black and white work; the latest chapter of Gideon is, as with Bad Company, the first in colour. Tomlinson again: "Simon's artwork was incredibly detailed, and its improved enormously since he moved into colour. I think it's terrific."

"I used to get really bogged down with cross-hatching," asserts Simon. "I used to get carried away and spend hours and hours doing it." Gideon is his third series in full colour: "There's one in *2000AD* at the moment, the 'Dead Meat' story. I was amazed how clearly it came out. The first story came out looking like mud, so I thought 'Right', cleaned it up, and it looks pristine, almost photocopied. If I'd known it was going to be that bright I'd probably have toned it down a little bit.

"ON GIDEON . . . THERE'S SO MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO PUT IN LOTS OF MOODY DETAIL – I LOVE DRAWING MONSTERS!" SIMON JACOB

"On Gideon there's an awful lot more that I can draw because it's basically fantasy with lots of wild things happening. There's so much opportunity to put in lots of moody details – I love drawing monsters! I use an airbrush a fair bit, but it tends not to have the same mood, you can't do the really heavy moody stuff. In *2000AD* it's a good idea to make the colours fairly vibrant otherwise they get washed out in the printing; I like to use very up front colour, very bright, very primary. In terms of technique it's still early days for me with colour work, and Gideon is the first time I've felt anywhere like I'm getting close to something. It just takes a bit of getting used to, having done black and white for so long."

The new series begins with a recap of the first series: "The last one ended on a cliff-hanger," says John. Simon Jacob explains:

"We'd left it where Frank, who's the main protagonist, has switched Gideon off in this ethereal other world, which opened a portal to this dimension for all the demons holed up there. The new series explores the consequences, the invasion of this dimension by demons from another plane."

"The whole planet is plunged into terrible carnage and *Ghostbusters* style madness." This is definitely something that John can get his teeth into. "Our hero has to find Gideon first of all, and then find a way of switching him back on. There's all kinds of mindless violence and senseless carnage along the way."

"It's all a bit involved," adds Simon. Which seems a good point to leave the reader in suspense to await the thirteen weekly revelations that are about to appear. Back to the relative safety of home, and some dodgy recording equipment.

FIREKIND

Did I say safe? The third series is a brand new serial by John Smith. Safe is not a word that immediately springs to mind.

Under the watchful gaze of Tharg, Richard Burton leans back in his chair and says "It started off originally as an idea to do a series about dragons, a fantasy series."

Half a country away, with only a telephone to link us, John Smith could be disembowling something while he says "It's supposed to be about dragons."

Supposed to be?

"There's dragons in it."

The planet-wide, fantasy setting isn't the usual John Smith hunting ground, which has worked best in the past in claustrophobic corners with the monsters at close quarters. "It was supposed to be like one of those Edgar Rice Burroughs novels, sort of 'Muscle Men of Mars' with dragons, but it ended up being a look at an alien society." Or to quote Richard, "He played around with it. There's a lot more in it now."

The artwork is by Paul Marshal, who took on the assignment in August 1990, and promptly dropped from sight for two years, finishing the strip 22 months later. When we spoke he was inking a page of 'Tyranny Rex' which has proved a far speedier operation (if there's a smudge on episode eight – that's when I phoned!). The strip is in full, and having seen some of the pages I can add remarkable, colour.

"The colouring after episode two is by Dondi Cox," Marshal reveals. "I did the first two and Dondi followed on from there. I wanted to concentrate on just doing the inking and the drawing, it being my first series. I knew Dondi's work-style and she's done a nice job on it. Very nice." The strip is an excellent showcase for both artists. With dragons.

"It's about a character called Larsen who is on the planet Gennyo'leil. He's on the planet to do an anthropological study, cataloguing the wildlife, the fauna – it's a jungle planet; he's also studying the culture of the Gennyans who are a very alien, very weird albino race.

"Everything's going well until these poachers descend on the planet after a drug called Hexacrin which is found in the glands of the sacred creatures found on the planet – dragon-like creatures called Kresheen.

"The poachers are slaughtering these animals and a war starts up between the poachers and the tribes of Gennyans; Larsen's caught in the middle, cast out by the Gennyans because they think he's in league with the poachers, and the poachers are trying to use his influence with the Gennyans to lead them to the main supply of this drug."

John Smith takes up the plot. "These dragons produce this substance from these weird symbiants that are attached to them. It starts off all about this alien society..."

"...and builds up to a nasty finish," concludes Paul. "It gets very nasty. It's a big, sprawling story – it would make a great film. There's murder, mayhem, slaughter, and a lot of violent retribution."

Nice. CW

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COMIC World

A CHANGE OF PACE THIS MONTH AS KEV F. SUTHERLAND TAKES A LOOK AT THE TIME-HONOURED ART OF RECEIVING REJECTION LETTERS.

REJECTION V

I file all my correspondence under R for Rejection.

For a while I tried to fool myself that it was really R for Replies, but it wasn't. Although now, as a phenomenally successful editor, writer, cartoonist and exaggerator, I have little cause to send off unsolicited material to comic editors, and indeed I am now in the privileged position of having to send rejections of my own, for most of my working life I have busied myself acquiring a formidable collection of Rejection Letters.

"IF A COMIC REJECTS YOUR WORK, THEN THE ONLY THING TO DO IS NOT SEND THAT PARTICULAR PIECE OF WORK TO THAT PARTICULAR COMIC AGAIN"

The most important thing any aspiring comics contributor must be told about Rejection Letters is: don't be put off by them. This is a piece of advice that I have found easier to accept by virture of the fact that not only was my first ever Rejection Letter one of great flattery and encouragement which led, in a short while, to paid work, but also it contained in its first paragraph the words "don't be put off by rejection letters".

This first letter came from a sub-editor whose equal I have yet to find, one Alan Grant. For a few brief months in 1979/80, Alan was the sub-ed to Steve McManus on *2000AD*, and his diligent efforts above and beyond the call of duty in responding to the unsolicited contributions of budding hopefuls extended to lengthy missives, often over four or five pages, devoted to mulling over quite unusable scripts and unlikely artwork, all typed entirely without the aid of capital letters, Alan's sterling work in this direction was not continued by his successor, but led in its time to the discovery of, amongst others, a former humourous writer and cartoonist who might otherwise have had difficulty breaking into comics, Alan Moore.

Those were, I suppose, easier days for the poor beleagured editorial staff of a comic like *2000AD* for, although its sales were far in excess of those achieved today, folk submitting work would have been far less likely to seriously believe they might actually get professional work there. So one carefully phrased letter of polite rejection would reaffirm said contributor's suspicion that he or she was indeed not worthy to join the hallowed few. Today, however, everybody and their aunt can be a comics professional, and it takes an exceptionally poor self-image to believe you're not as good as most of the stuff you see in print, so generally more people try harder and more often.

Therefore far more Rejection Letters are written, and far less time can be devoted to them. Before and after Alan Grant's time at *2000AD*, budding writers were sent a photocopied document called 'Writing For *2000AD* by Kelvin Gosnell', which laid down the law in respect of obligatory action scenes, mandatory inclusion of large space hardware, and invention of interesting and original concepts. Sadly this document has lately fallen into neglect.

However what survives is the single photocopied page that I have been seen as recently as 1990, offering advice to potential artists. One priceless line reads, "Please ensure the drawings you supply are relevant to *2000AD*. We are not interested in pictures of half-naked women nor scenes of offensive violence." One can only suppose that this letter was received, but ignored, by Simon Bisley and almost all of the current contributors.

This is not to say, however, that all Rejection Letters are a photocopied formality, and that your work has not been appreciated or even properly looked at. Between the lines of the modern Rejection Letter the editor can tell you a great deal about not only your work, but also themselves.

Let us look at the basic forms of Rejection Letters:

THE FORM LETTER

1. The Form Letter. Since the advent of the word processor, the Form Letter has become harder to spot. Previously, your name would be handwritten, or typed in a different ink or typeface, atop an obviously photostatted letter stating that your work was unsuitable for the publication. Some publications still, amazingly, continue this practice (stand up David Bishop of *Judge Dredd Megazine*) while most have taken to programming in their standard letter and printing out a copy, complete with your name and address and possibly a reference to the title of your contribution integrated into the text. The way to identify this as a form letter is to send a subsequent contribution and match the replies. Other notable culprits are most TV companies, most newspapers, Marvel and DC in the States (although both have paid return postage when not sent an s.a.e.) and *Zit* comic.

Often the despatchers of these form letters are so blase as to their contents that they forget how silly they read. From the same stable as the risible *2000AD* Advice For Artists comes the *Judge Dredd Megazine* form letter which reads, "Unfortunately the *Megazine* is now fully commissioned for the next 15 months". Whether this is at worst arrogant or at best hopelessly optimistic is not my place to say, I just pity the next Alan Moore if he should choose this year to send them his stuff.

THE DICTATED LETTER

2. The Dictated Letter. Again the word processor has altered the nature of this reply so that it can often be typed by the editor him/himself, but in essence it is an attempt to follow the polite convention of appearing to reply in person without wasting too much unnecessary time. Formerly an editor would have dictated, while giving the work a cursory glance, "Dear Mr . . . er check the spelling of his surname will you? . . . Thank you for your contribution 'insert title' . . ., sadly it is not

Art by Dave M. Windett

NO THANK YOU WITHOUT TEARS

in keeping with our . . . blah blah . . . but may I suggest you contact XYZ publication to whom you are far more suited, yours et cetera et cetera." This letter would often be signed by someone whose name began "p.p.", which Latin derivation escapes me now but it means "signed by an underling".

This is the form I favour myself as editor. I am able to offer contributors a coverall explanation of the state of the magazine and its requirements, regularly updated, and a list of alternative editors names and addresses that they might wish to contact. Before this semi-personal approach, I employed the next device:

THE TICK-BOX LETTER

3. The Tick-Box Letter. This, I now realise, is at best inadequate to express the editor's intentions, and at worst a very insulting and demeaning form indeed. It consists of a list of options on a photocopied sheet, with a tick beside the appropriate response. The most unsulting was from *The Truth* comic which read, in giant letters, "NO THANK YOU" then gave a choice of terse explanations as to why your work had been rejected, including "We think you should try again much later/take up accountancy/end it all now while you've still got some dignity left". This type of letter is also used by Fantagraphics Books and Acne comics, though in fairness their replies to me are always followed by a personal handwritten addendum (highlighting the inadequacy of this type of letter). In *UT*'s case we had 64 tickboxes to choose from, and I still had to add a note in most cases.

Perhaps the worst Tick Box Letter is one that hasn't even been ticked (see *2000AD* Advice to Artists, above).

THE PERSONAL LETTER

4. The Personal Letter. If you get this it is A Good Thing, and means one of two other Good Things: either (a) you are worthy of being written to in person, something that takes precious minutes no matter how fast the editor types, or (b) the editor is A Good Person who does this for everyone, in which case we should all be thankful such a person still exists. Editors of my acquaintance worthy of note in this respect include the aforementioned Alan Grant, Martin Skidmore late of Trident, all of whose responses were handwritten by the way, Steve Holland of *Comc World* (ditto), Brian Clarke formerly of London Editions and Fleetway, Bambos and Fiona Jerome of John Brown, Paul Cockburn late of *Triffik*, almost all DC Thomson editors, the old guard at Fleetway including Barrie Tomlinson, and a healthy handful more (including every editor I have ever worked for or hope to work for again, by the way).

Beware the letter that appears Personal but is in fact Dictated, or even worse Form. One such came to me from the BBC's *Dr Who* Script Editor when the programme closed its office in 1990. The letter told me "I am very sorry to have to return your script. I have retained it for so long because among the huge number of scripts we receive yours struck me as particularly interesting." Flattering? Bollocks. If my script was so unique, how come the letter was photocopied with my name typed in at a different angle?

NO REPLY

5. No Reply. This can often be the contributor's fault, thanks to their failing to include a stamped addressed envelope. To do so and to expect the editorial staff to stump up the postage, and find the extra time to stuff and address an envelpe is rude in the extreme. I know, 'cos I've done it dozens of time.

If you include an s.a.e. and still get no reply, then the magazine is either very rude itself, or very busy, *Viz* purports to fall into the former category, boasting of not having replied to anyone in two years, but this is a lie. Editor Chris Donald writes back only if genuinely interested, and then always in person, choosing to paint himself black rather than fob somone off with a form letter. *2000AD* are the very definition of the latter category, by virtue of their having both the largest mailbag of any single comic, and the most messed-up buggered around organisation imaginable (they have been forced to move office four times in five years, and must be forgiven anything).

So there you have the long and short of the Rejection Letter. As you can see, I have received more than my fair share, and if I had allowed myself to be deterred by any one of them I would be even less successful than I am now (and amazingly, that is possible). If a comic rejects your work, then the only thing to do is not send that particular piece of work to that particular comic again. Otherwise continue as before, pausing to absorb any advice if and when it's offered.

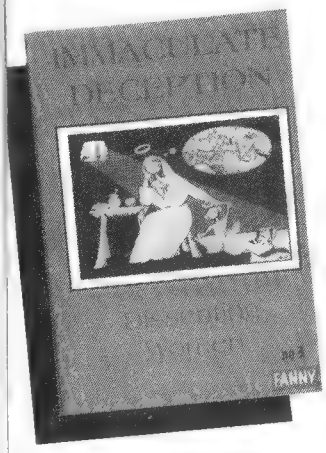
Statistically almost every piece of work is rejected by almost everybody almost all the time. It doesn't matter. Stick at it, and soon you could find yourself in a position where you can write Rejection Letters to the next generation of young hopefuls and totally bugger up their careers.

Or failing that, buy a box file with a very large 'R' section.

Kev Sutherland is the editor of UT and Bloody Hell, writer for Red Dwarf, Kack and many more. CW

MULTI-

THE BREAKFAST PROJECT



The Breakfast Project, an exhibition of cartoon art by more than fifty women comics creators from around the world, was launched on September 18 1992 at The Gallery in London's Pentonville Road.

The idea of cartoonist/writer Susan *(Overheard At America's Lunch Counters)* Catherine, the theme of the exhibition is 'Famous Women Eating Breakfast'. Ms. Catherine explains the choice of theme:

"The idea to do a show of people eating breakfast came to me in the Fall of 1991 as I sat alone at my word processor in Berlin with a cup of black coffee and a peach (yes, I was eating breakfast!). The idea that famous women be portrayed followed immediately, because a woman who achieves distinction has to recreate herself, and that has almost always required a strong public persona. The contrast between this public construct and the intimate personality of the breakfast table is something I find exciting."

To help the project, she turned to Carol Bennett, co-director of London publishers and distributors, Knockabout Comics. Ms. Bennett, colloquially known as 'The Godmother of British Women's Comics', has, in addition to the *Seven Ages of Women* trade paperback and the themed anthology, *Fanny*, compiled a Directory of women comic creators which was invaluable in contacting potential contributors.

The eventual contributors came from such diverse nations as Botswana, Poland, Turkey, Ireland, and, of course, the UK, USA and Europe; Donna Barr, Roberta Gregory, Trina Robbins, Barb Rausch, Sharon Rudahl, Nina Paley and Diane Noomin are amongst the best known of the American contingent.

Subjects of the cartoons included Queen Elizabeth II, k.d. lang, Eve, Lucretia Borgia, the Virgin Mary, Miss America, Cher and Barbie.

The exhibition moved to Germany in October, appearing at Berlin's Grober Unfug gallery, and has recently appeared at the International Bande Desinee Festival at Angouleme in France, the first women's exhibition to appear at Angouleme in the festival's twenty years.

She knew she would soon gain a Martyrs Crown. Soldiers seized her and threw her into a raging FIRE
But the Lord preserved her pure body
At last, they thrust a sword deep into her heart, and her soul flew home to heaven!
The story of Saint Lucy was told for a PURPOSE, girls -
Doodling in your notebook AGAIN, Miss Kennedy? Haven't you been WARNED about that?
To show us how to respond when the Lord asks SACRIFICE of US...
Maybe soon Kennedy, the Lord will demand something precious from YOU...
Ai! Yi Yi -- Mesister

In February, the show will move on to Amsterdam's Malkweg Gallery, and it is hoped that further exhibitions will be organised throughout Europe and the USA.

Interested parties should contact either Carol Bennett, Knockabout Comics, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ, or Susan Catherine, Pallasstrasse 12, W-1000, Berlin 30, Germany.

IMMACULATE DECEPTION

The latter, only recently published, presents sixteen women cartoonist's views on religion and faith – including Caroline Risdale's presentation of the diet and exercise creed as a media-inspired road to salvation, Kate Charlesworth & Wren Sidhes' bizarre amalgam of pagan domesticity, media muckraking and *Blue Peter* style TV presentation, which, together with Hilary Robinson & Suzy Varty's vignette of the Virgin Mary's appearance in 1990s Dublin, are the outstanding strips in an entertaining collection. There's also a welcome gesture towards balance, with one strip emphasising the protagonist's contentment and fulfilment within the Church – but, unfortunately, the attempt is sabotaged by execrable spelling which makes the strip virtually illegible! Nevertheless, *The Immaculate Deception* is an enjoyable and thought-provoking anthology.

Howard Stangroom

DIRECTORY OF WOMEN COMICS CREATORS

As mentioned above, Carol Bennett is also the compiler of *The Fanny Directory*, the London-based collection of work from women comics creators all over the world, which is currently seeking new and updated entries. The aims of the directory, which has been running successfully since 1991 are:

"To collect together representative samples of the women's work, together with contact addresses and telephone numbers, so communications between the women and publishers can be quick and efficient.

"To publicise the fact that, contrary to popular belief, a substantial number of women do work in the field, and have an interest in comics, and magazines and events connected with comics illustration.

"To keep address lists of women comics creators so they can be added to the lists of comic artists for international festivals and conventions, helping information on these events to reach everyone in time to be prepared and free to participate."

The Directory presently includes over 180 women creators from the USA, Canada, the UK, Europe, Australia, Africa, and whatever they're calling the U.S.S.R. this week.

Any women creators who wish to be included, or to update or amend a former entry should send their name, address, telephone number and one page of artwork or script that can be used to photocopy and pass on to any publisher or editor interested. These should be sent to Carol (address above). Two International Response Coupons or an SAE should be included if you require an acknowledgement.

In addition to the Directory, the Fanny co-operative publishes a regular newsletter, and a series of themed comics under the Fanny banner. Three comics have already been issued, *Ceasefire: Women Against War*, *Voyeuse: Women View Sex*, and *The Immaculate Deception: Women and Religion*.

MEDIA

COMPUTER SECTION

Batman Returns

Nintendo NES

The first of many *Batman Returns* format licenses, finds the caped crusader, Penguin and Catwoman all doing battle in a fair-ish rendition of the film. However if you are looking for a straight re-working of the film, then you'll be disappointed. Beat 'em action in over drive as the Dark Knight makes his way through a number of different levels from the Plaza, to Shrecks department store meeting Catwoman on the way and on to a final watery confrontation with the Penguin. Fine graphics (including some particularly impressive inter-scene graphics), sound and a relatively flicker free animation makes for a smart beat 'em up. Good stuff all round. Worth checking out. 9 out of 10.

Chakan – The Forever Man

Sega Mega Drive

Graphically (and gothically) inspired slash 'em up that manages to capture the atmosphere of the books very well. Chakan sets out to collect 12 mystic alchemies, travelling through assorted time and space continuums and cutting as many people as possible on the way. Low on the violence side, with no sign of blood and gore anywhere (even when Chakan swords are flying) but very high on playability levels, if a little sticky on the control system side. If you liked the book, you'll like the game. 8 out of 10.

Robocop 3

Super NES

The game license of the film that never was. And if this game is anything to go by, that's no bad thing. Great graphics don't stop this walk through shoot 'em up being highly frustrating and a total waste of money. With a learning curve set way to high, the whole thing sucks. Avoid like the plague. 2 out of 10.

NEWS

This month see's the launch of *Fist of the North Star* on the SNES in Japan, based on the Manga comic and video the whole thing looks not unlike Street Fighter II.

Also from Manga, the license for an *Akira* game has been snapped up by the SF II company, CapCom. We can expect to see the game early in '94.

Reports of a bidding war for the rights to produce the game of the *Judge Dread* film if (when, ever?) it appears have filtered through. Companies are reported to be offering silly money for the rights.

An updated version of the Japanese comic inspired beat 'em up *Rama One Half* is now available from all good grey importers. It's a twelve meg cart and well worth checking out for the amazing graphics.

Jeremy Daldry

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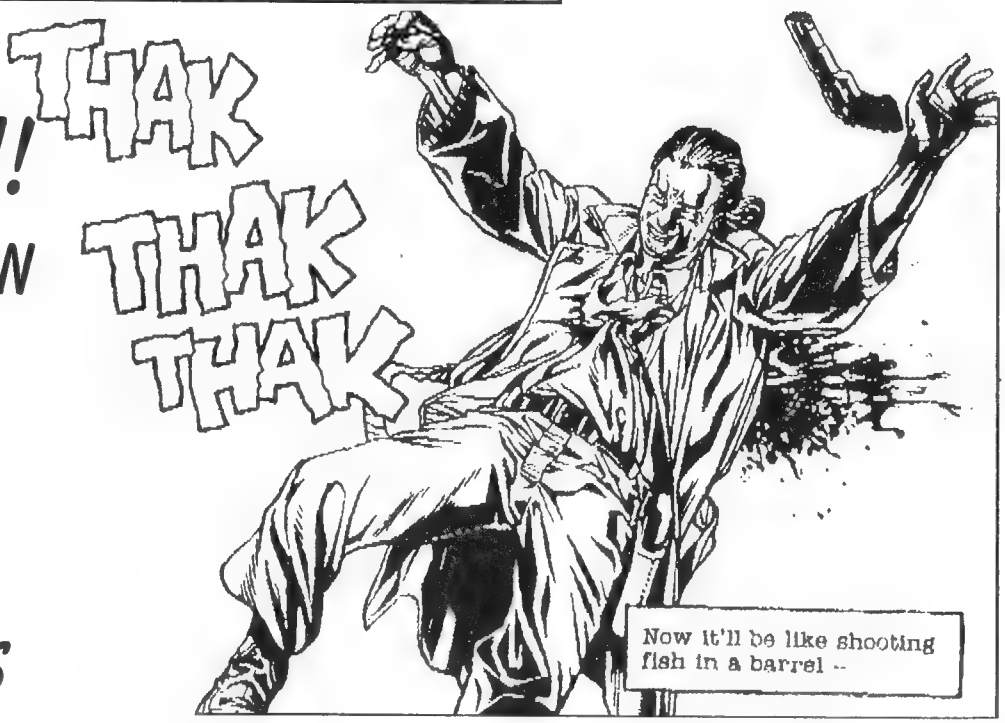

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VERTIGO

The first two Vertigo titles are here and after all the furore has the wait been worth it?

Death: The High Cost of Living *($1.95)* has a wonderful Dave McKean cover, beautiful, intriguing, totally irrelevant. The story has Death brought to life in modern day New York, meeting a young, bored, suicidal 16 year old. The dialogue is sharp and funny, Death is cute and the only thing that lets it down is that 250 year old Mad Hetty, who has tracked down Death in order to find her lost heart, doesn't come across as terribly threatening even with a broken bottle in her hand. And perhaps more could have been made of the question whether Death *was* Death, or a normal 16 year old girl in shock after the death of her parents. Gaiman's strength is his dialogue and cute characters, which makes this a winner.

Shade the Changing Man 33 *($1.75)* is a good entry point if you've not been reading Pete Milligan's mad monthly. Shade for beginners: he came from the planet Meta, had a vest of madness, turned into a woman for a while, and then died in issue 32. So it's a good starting point as Shade is reborn into the body of a lunatic called Empty, drawn back to Earth by his ex-sidekick Kathy, her lover Lenny and the ghost of Kathy's ex-boyfriend. Adding to the madness is a serial torturer who wants to use Kathy to help him open the door to the Garden of Pain. This involves lots of torture, as you'd expect. Now, Milligan *can* create really threatening characters which makes this the better of the two.

Art for both is by Chris Bachalo who must be recognised soon as a major talent, with Mark Buckingham's inks helping tip the balance in favour of *Death* artwise.

(Neil Cooper)

THE END OF WHAT?
LIFE
GIVE ME A BREAK AND I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE
OF COURSE I KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE, SECTION 1 DO
I'M DEATH

PEEPSHOW #3

by Joe Matt, Drawn and Quarterly, $2.50

Arguably the most masochistic of all autobiographical comics, *Peepshow* tells us the continuing story of Joe Matt's sordid and blackly humorous life. In this comic, nothing is left to the imagination. Joe puts his life under the microscope for all of us to see and though there are plenty of laughs along the way, he also shows us the truth about what he does behind closed doors, and in many cases it isn't pretty viewing.

Currently still in the doldrums after Trish, his long-suffering girlfriend left him (see #2), Joe decides it's time to try and find someone else.

After being collared by a fan in the comic shop, he falls instantly for the guy's girlfriend. What follows is a hilarious record of his attempts to woo her; his failure to get Trish back, and his failure to find anyone else to take her place.

Although this all sounds very depressing, this is one of the funniest comics on the market today. Joe is a master of self-deprecating wit and an excellent cartoonist. The fact that he so openly lays his life out on the page, and makes no attempt to hide from the more unsavoury aspects of his character, makes it all the more worthwhile.

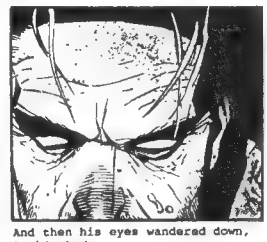
Whoever said "there is nothing more amusing than someone else's misfortune" was dead right, and *Peepshow* is proof of the pudding.

(Andy Brewer)

He wouldn't have been feeling pain.

The pain would come later. There'd be all kinds of pain later.

It was the face I was mostly interested in. I was looking for the transformation. The rapture. I was looking for the final beatitude I used to see on the faces of the martyrs.


Ah, the eyes gradually focused on me.

Such a look of confusion! He could feel something wrong, but...

And then his eyes wandered down, to his body,

and he saw my work.

REV

SIN CITY

by Frank Miller, Titan Books, £7.99

This is comics *noir* at its darkest. If you want to know how dark a comic can get, read this. *Sin City* is black cat in a coal shed at midnight with its eyes closed dark.

Originally serialised in *Dark Horse Presents*, this is the graphic novel that kicks you in the groin rather than let you read it. There's no hero here, just a confused, violent bastard out to revenge the whore he picked up, only to find her dead when he wakes up from his drunken sex. Max had a face and body like beaten leather, a brain held together by tranquillisers, and å violent streak the width of the Atlantic.

Sin City is the seediest place you

THIRTEEN O'CLOCK

by Richard Sala, Dark Horse, $2.95

"Eyes are watching from a hidden room . . . an unknown killer is prowling the night . . . an evil chuckle echoes down a shadowy corridor . . . in the tower the bell is ringing. It's Thirteen O'Clock." Welcome to the mysterious world of Mr. Murmur, where you will meet a glowing skull, woman-eating plants, deviant ventriloquism, the corkscrew killer, a.k.a. the 'wheezer', mesmerism, a ruthless villain, his head swathed in bandages, called the Web (whose first appearance is a gem – "Listen, Doc – Where is it? Where is my face?!"), and science gone mad. All this in one story!

The obvious comparison is with Charles Burns' *Hard Boiled Defective Stories*. Like Burns, Sala overcomes any bemusement at the daftness of the concept through the increasing derangement of the story. Alas, while Burns always manages to keep a straight face, Sala starts to snigger along with his readers at the end, with an utterly silly climax as Mr. Murmur beats the villains thanks to a vase of chrysanths. Still, where else will you find stories about sea beasts, go go dancers, evil oceanographers, ape zombies. . . .

(Teddy Jamieson

could imagine, built on corruption and payoffs, the scum sinks under the weight of more scum, the lowlifes are crawling lower than worms. If Frank Castle came here he'd shit in his pants. Max fits in perfectly.

Miller has produced his most twisted story yet, set off by dynamite artwork and dialogue that could cut diamonds. It's black and white, and, God help us, it's *really* black. Schwarzenegger would be ugly enough to take the part in the film, but would he be tough enough? This is *Darker Knight*, this is *Harder Boiled*, and you'd better buy it before it goes for your throat.

(Simon Hall)

SHORT REVIEWS

Not since the fondly-remembered days of *The Secret Society of Super-Villains* has there been such a profusion of comics giving top billing to the bad guys; Eclipso terrorizes the DC Universe while Doctor Doom stomps his way around the future at Marvel. Now feel a shiver slide down your back as that thoroughly icky Spider-villain **Venom** gets a six-issue series to call his own. Marvel obviously fancy their chances with it; your $2.95 gets you twenty-two pages of story in a luxurious package. If you're going to be asked to pay for thick, glossy paper and foil-stamped card covers, you have a right to expect something out of the ordinary, and this is nothing more special than a few dozen cheaper titles Marvel have out this month.

No Venom in **Captain America 412** (Marvel, $1.25), but every other menace to society going appears. Cap's gone undercover to gatecrash a villain's Weapons Expo – one of those concepts which is quite appealing in a daft sort of way. All those dumb evil-doers no-one could ever take seriously attend – I ask you . . . Killer Shrike? The art could be flatteringly described as functional: it gets the story across for the most part, but it's unattractively rendered with a procession of awkwardly-drawn figures.

It's also a pretty typical example of the production line feel you get when you ask an artist to produce over twenty pages a month. If you've ever tried producing a page a day for even a brief time, you'll appreciate that it can be a back-breaking task. The professional artist has the choice of staying up all hours to produce work he can stand by, or cutting some corners and getting some sleep. A similar situation and then some exists in Japan, where the creator has to have assistants to help him meet the heavy workload. Judging by the examples we get to see in the West, Japanese artists seem to have found a more aesthetic solution to the problem of doing good work on time. In volume one, issue one of **Version** (Dark Horse, $2.50), you can see a good example of the cartoon shorthand the Japanese have developed, and how it allows time for some wit and imagination to enter into the artistic process – a more

appetising product than the creative limpness of the typical superhero comic. Hisashi Sakaguchi's story is similarly inventive: get ready to take a few deep breaths before plunging into some serious scientific exposition.

More lively cartooning lurks patiently in wait in **Stanley And His Monster 1** (DC, $1.50). Although, as the afterword points out, there are obvious comparisons to be made with *Calvin And Hobbes* (and, Paul Kupperberg, try telling Hobbes that he's not real!), in fact this mini-series is another DC revival of an old strip. Is there anyone left to resurrect now? Phil Foglio has done a fine job on this; the inevitable super-cameos are dealt with briefly so we can get on with the far more enjoyable job of exploring Stanley's world, a comforting place of marshmallows and tree forts.

While we're on the subject of revivals, **Protectors 4** (Malibu, $2.50 and not a trace of Robert Vaughn, sadly) continues the revamping of some obscure Golden Age characters created for the publishers Centaur. You shouldn't have any trouble identifying the basic archetypes among the team members, and it doesn't seem as though anything new is being done with them. Despite packing the sub-plots in most efficiently, there's no compelling reason to give it a second glance unless you're a Centaur groupie.

Journey now into the next century, or *a* next century at any rate, for **The Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect 1** (Marvel, $5.95). Thrill as some very big fights indeed occur and much property is needlessly destroyed. Sense your eyesight deteriorate as you look at the detail George Perez crams into each panel. Marvel at the Hulk's muscles on the embossed cover. The ubiquitous Peter David and Perez manage to confer a sense of occasion onto the proceedings which comes close to justifying the price. It's time these Prestige Format books were knocked on the head; have pity, Marvel and DC!

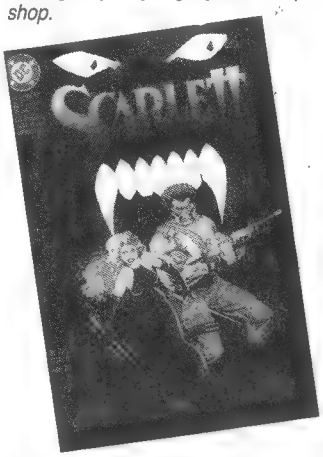
Scarlett 1 (DC, $2.95) brings us back into the present and introduces Bly Pharis. Bly's just another high school cheerleader in a sleepy Mid-West suburb; little does she suspect that because of her parents' mysterious past, she is doomed to spend eternity trapped in a bad Clive Barker movie. Not another (choke) vampire motorcycle gang . . . Hopefully future issues will give *Scarlett* the more distinctive identity it needs to establish to have a chance of surviving; in the meantime Jim Fern's sprightly, expressive artwork has the elasticity of Alex Nino with traces of Joe Kubert in there as well, and there are forty-eight pages for you to sink your teeth into.

Richard Sala's art in **Thirteen O'Clock** (Dark Horse, $2.95) has more in common with the decorative preoccupations of contemporary book and magazine illustrators than the usual comic artist influences (other comic artists). Sala celebrates the trashy wonders of pulp fiction by bunging everyone's favourite weird plot elements into the stew. The result is a little self-conscious and not as funny as it thinks it is, but entertaining all the same. It's a relief to know that Dark Horse haven't given up on supporting alternative material in the search for the next film licence.

A few of the final set of DC Mature Reader titles, before the Big Switch over to the Vertigo imprint, include a commendable extra strip by Gaiman and McKean (who should abandon his trademark painting style, which looks as though it relies too heavily on photographs, in favour of his nervy expressive linework more often), in which Death discusses AIDS and how to practice safe sex. Because of the manner in which most comics treat the subject (if at all), the stereotypical fanboy traditionally enjoys only a slightly higher rating than the trainspotter in the sex god charts, so this could signal a refreshing approach to its audience from Vertigo. Tune in next month to see if the first batch of titles shipped on time.

(Richard Hill)

Review copies courtesy of Birmingham's Fantastic Store (021-643 3667). The prices are quoted in dollars; the corresponding price in sterling may vary slightly from shop to shop.



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Ipswich
Dear Steve,
Firstly I'd just like to say how much I agree with every single word of Andy Brewer's letter in the current issue. Neary's comments were very depressing. It leaves me with the ever growing impression that I'm wasting my time reading and buying comics. Besides, I can never find comics I want. Before leaving the subject of Masterclasses, I can well imagine there was wails of laughter over David Bishop's remarks about them paying their creator's 'great money'!

Paul Charters
York
Dear Steve,
Thank God! Someone finally prints the truth. The 'Masterclass' series is telling it like it is. There must be thousands of others who, like me, would love to draw comics professionally. I've spent hours at Conventions trying to see editors to show them my portfolio, and most of the time the only advice anyone has offered me is "try again". OK, maybe I'm not the best artist in the world (yet) but it would help to know exactly what editors want to see. Andy Brewer's letter *(issue 12)* suggested that Paul Neary was telling everyone to copy Rob Liefeld or Todd McFarlane. That's not the way I read it: he said "most artists learn by looking at the work of other artists," and when he says "don't be ashamed about copying other people's work," Andy's maybe playing devil's advocate and deliberately imagining that Paul means we should all get out our tracing paper.

I think he answers his own argument: "Is it any wonder then, with attitudes like this that Marvel in particular, produce the most redundant, derivative and unimaginably bland" (in Andy's opinion) "set of titles. *Sure they sell well to the kids, and Marvel have become the most successful comic company around through following the guidelines that Paul espouses*" (my emphasis). That says it all! And if comic publishers didn't sell at least some of their comics, Andy wouldn't be able to produce a fanzine about them.

The Masterclass has generated a lot of mail, so it deserves some explanation. The Reader's Poll we ran at UKCAC, which we repeated in our January issue, was our readers chance to say what they wanted to see in Comic World, *and one of the most popular ideas was a series about how to get into the business.*

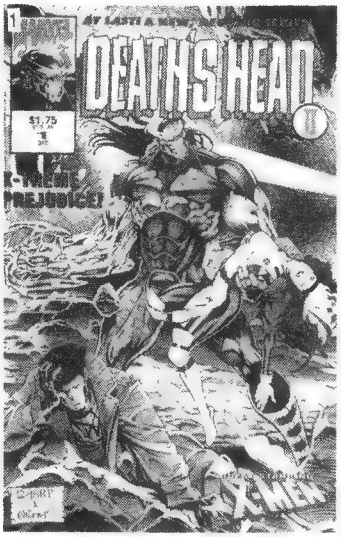
There have been plenty of 'How to...' books in the past which will show you how to lay out a script and give you hints as to what sort of brush to use when you're inking, so we deliberately wanted to publish a series offering practical advice, from editors and people in the business. Paul Neary was one of our first port's of call: since he took over as Editor-in-Chief at Marvel he's turned it into one of the most successful companies publishing comics.

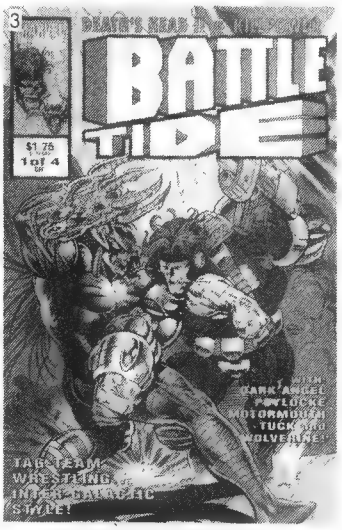
When we interviewed Paul we asked him to concentrate his comments on how to break into the kind of successful titles he was currently publishing. He was honest about the way Marvel work, and offered some hard-core advice for writers and artists if they want to become part of that success story.

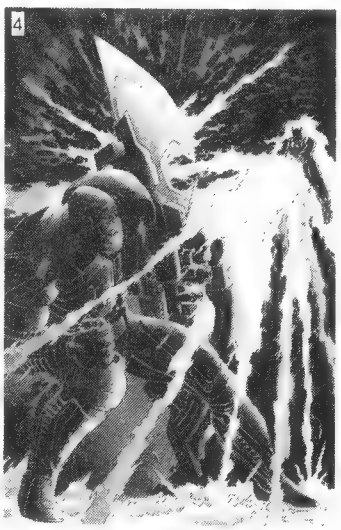
As anyone who has seen Paul's work in comics in the past, whether it's as a writer on stories like 'The Madman' in Warrior *or 'Happenstance and Kismet' in* Revolver *and* Crisis, *or as an artist, having spent years inking Alan Davis and working solo on stories ranging from the Warren magazines back in the 1970s to a Nick Fury prestige format mini-series a couple of years back, it should be obvious that when he's not wearing his Marvel Editor-in-Chief hat his personal tastes are far more diverse.*

Most artists carry the influences of their favourite artists – even artists who are now producing artwork with no recognisable precedents: where would Bill Sienkiewicz be without Neil Adams or Shakey Kane without Jack Kirby? But you wouldn't accuse either of them as being copyists.

The bottom line arguement for following a publishers advice is that they have a better idea of their market than you do and they usually give advice in fairly broad terms. That leaves the writer and artist to interpret stories the way they want. Similarly the broad advice from Paul was to "blend other artists work into your own style." Practical and honest, it seemed to me.





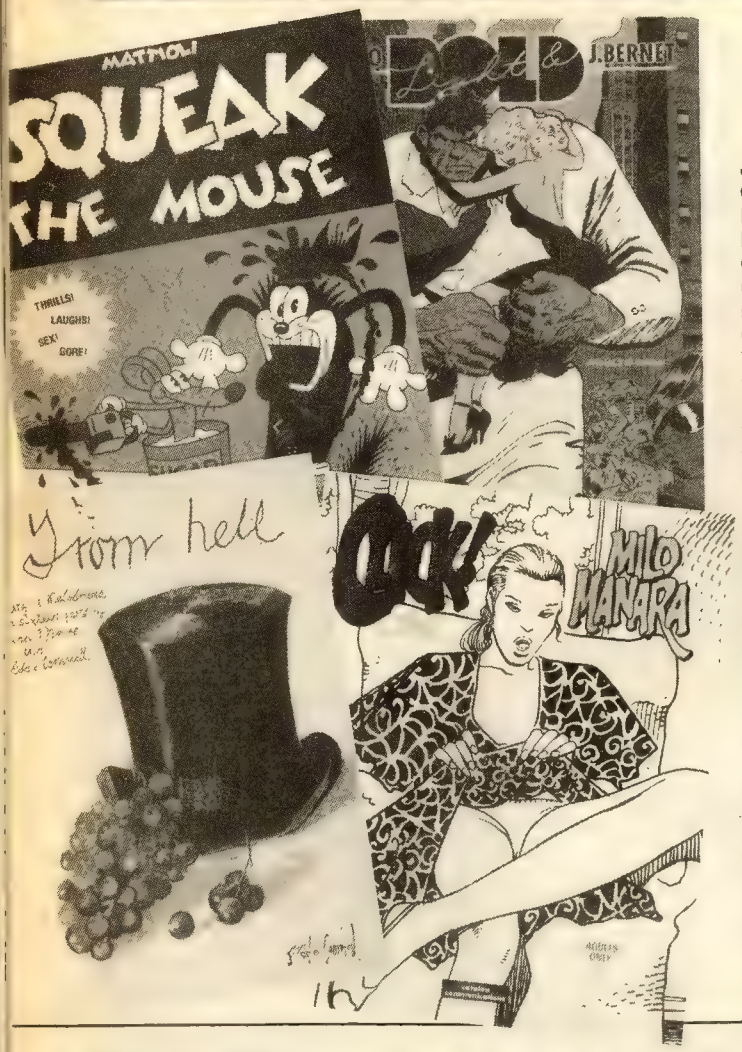


THE EVIDENCE

Evidence of Marvel's success can be seen in recent sales figures: Marvel's best-selling Top Five are

1 Death's Head II #1	365,000
2 Wild Thing #1	315,000
3 Battle Tide #1	250,000
4=Black Axe #1	200,000†
Supersoldiers	200,000†

† The figures for both Black Axe and Supersoldiers were still rising at the time we went to press.



GOSH!

Josh Palmano
Gosh! Comics
London

Dear Steve,

On Friday the 22nd of January, Customs and Excise returned to my store the majority of goods that had been seized during their October raid. That afternoon, a telephone call from the Lawyer acting on my behalf to C&E HQ in Southampton revealed that the case was no longer being treated as a criminal investigation, but simply as a seizure.

We were given the option of no longer contesting the seizure and having a quiet life, or continuing our fight and risking the case being reopened, withg the outcome possibly resulting in a criminal record for myself.

Really very little choice.

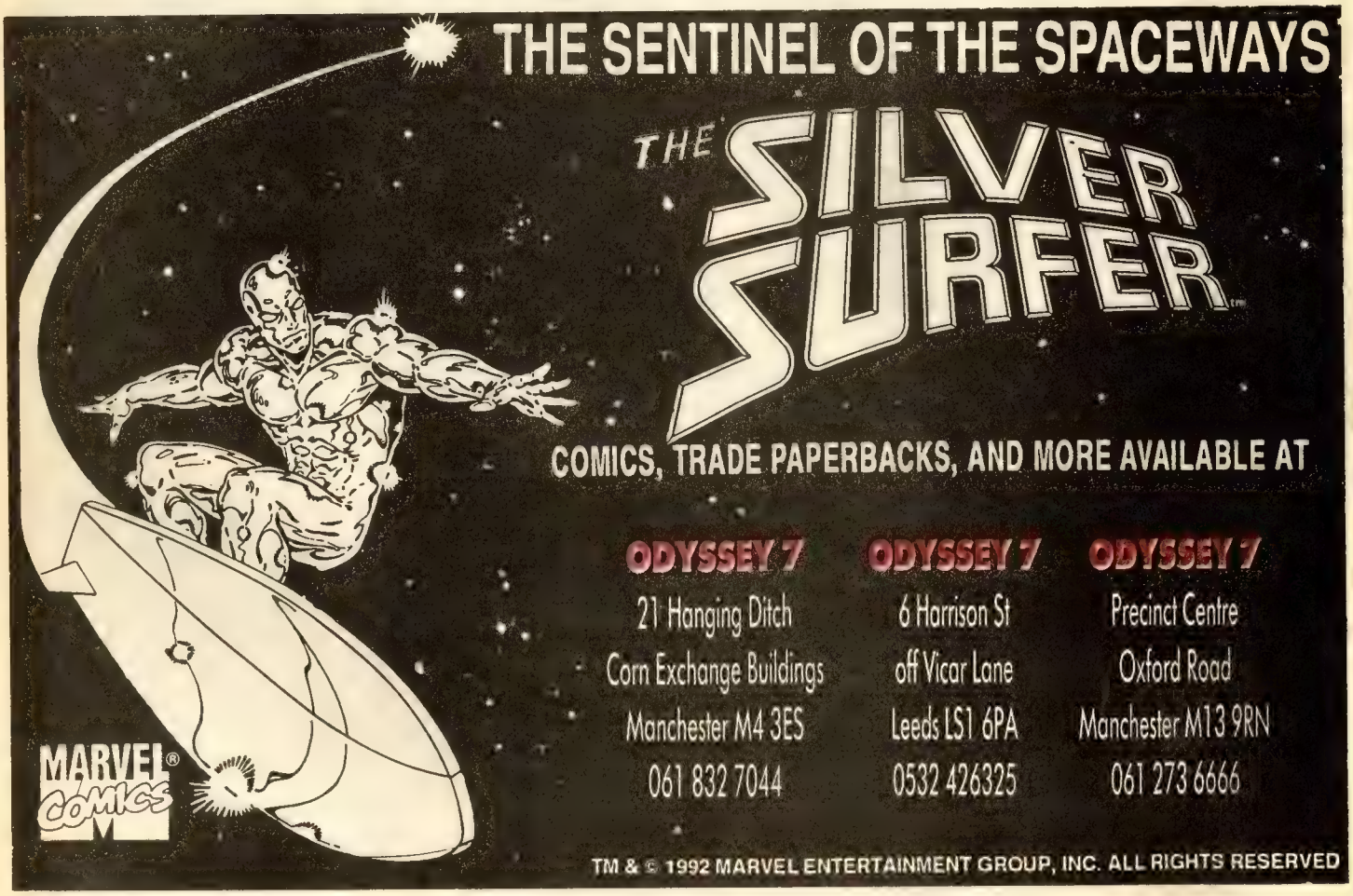
The books that I am for the moment unable to stock are listed below:

Coco
Manga
Necron 1, 2 & 3
Click
Light and Bold
Emmanuelle 1 & 2
Black Squares on White Pieces
Taboo 5 & 6
Squeak the Mouse
Real Stuff 3 & 6
Cicciolina
Peter Pank
ID (Crumb) 1
Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde
Love that Bunch
The Survivor Vol.2
From Hell Vol.1
Dulled Feelings

More interesting than what they kept – I think – is what they returned. Items such as *Erma Jaguar*, *Omaha the Cat Dancer Vol.2* (copies of which were seized from one of my previous shipments and destroyed), and the *Rankxerox* collections. This has left me in a position of having no idea what is acceptable to Customs and what is not.

I have written to The Customs and Excise Directorate requesting information and guide lines concerning the importation of graphic narratives which contain adult themes. Regrettably I do not expect their reply to be clear cut or helpful.

I'm sure the news that the majority of the items seized from Gosh! have been returned will take a weight off the minds of many dealers and comic shop owners in the UK, although the lack of guidelines still makes the importation of adult comics a risky business.



THE COMIC World READERS POLL

As this is the first issue of 1993 we're instigating the COMIC WORLD READERS POLL, your chance to nominate your choice of the best in comic books for 1992. All you have to do is fill in your nomination for each catagory on this form or a copy, and send it to COMIC WORLD READERS POLL, 89 EAST HILL, COLCHESTER CO1 2QN, to arrive no later than Friday 26th February 1993.

Voting is open to all readers of COMIC WORLD, and the extended deadline should allow overseas readers the chance to vote as well.

If you don't want to vote in any particular category, leave a blank, but please vote for only one winner in each category.

We're offering a prize to the first five voting forms received, even if you're not voting in some sections,

SO GET VOTING.

UK SECTION

Best ongoing title	:
Best one-shot/graphic novel	:
Best limited series	:
Best story in a single issue	:
Best artist (pencils)*	:
Best artist (inks)*	:
Best writer	:
Best colourist**	:
Best letterer	:
Best editor	:
Most promising new title	:
Most promising newcomer (writer)	:
Most promising newcomer (artist)	:

US SECTION ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

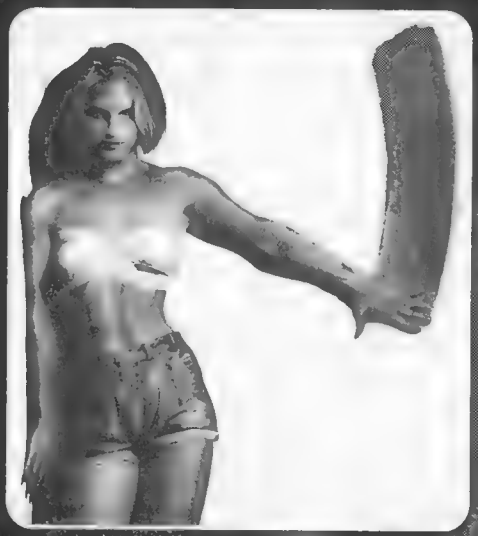
Best ongoing title	:
Best one-shot/graphic novel	:
Best limited series	:
Best story in a single issue	:
Best artist (pencils)	:
Best artist (inks)	:
Best writer	:
Best colourist**	:
Best letterer	:
Best editor	:
Most promising new title	:
Most promising newcomer (writer)	:
Most promising newcomer (artist)	:

*since most British comics are drawn by a single artist, one overall nomination will be accepted for a Best penciller/inker.

**nominations can include artists who produce fully painted artwork.

BAD BLOOD

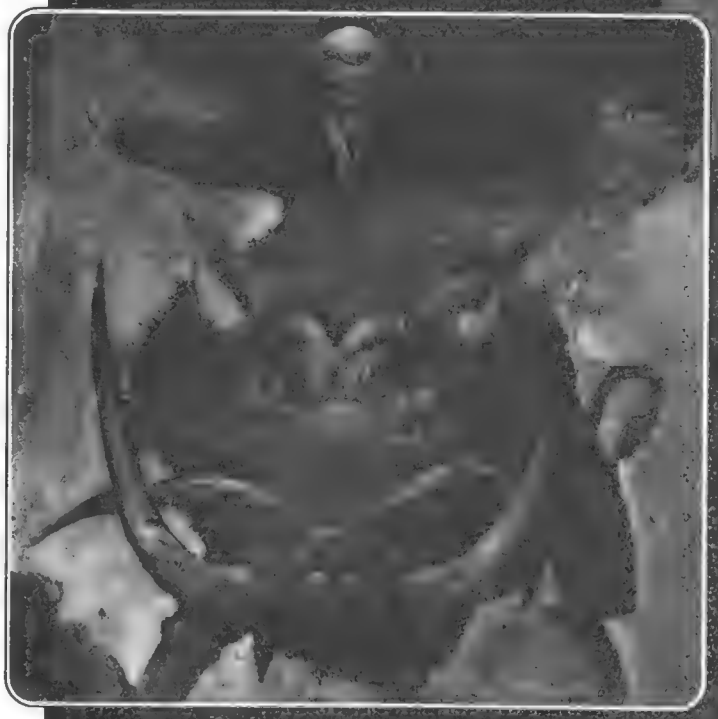
Three books of bloodlust each with an original cover and free poster from the master of horror painting, *John Bolton*. SWEETMEATS by *Steve Tanner* and *Pete Venters*, SUGARVIRUS by *Warren Ellis*, *Martin Chaplin* and *Garry Marshall* and NIGHT VISION by *David Quinn* and *Hannibal King*. Forget the pretty gothic trappings of Ann Rice, these books are grimy, sordid and truly evil. Bi-monthly from FEBRUARY 1993



ATOM

THE LORDS OF MISRULE

From *John Tomlinson* (Digitek), *Gary Erskine* (Warheads), *Dan Abnett* (Punisher) & *Steve White* comes THE LORDS OF MISRULE. An unholy marriage of "Twin Peaks" and HP Lovecraft, the 64pp graphic novel graced with a stunning cover by *Simon Bisley* is to be followed in June by a full-colour, six-issue monthly series. A nightmare world that falls between Hellblazer and The Books of Blood. FEBRUARY 1993



MONSTER MASSACRE

A monster 64pp, full-colour anthology. This senseless-violence-and-steroid heaven will explode into a full-colour, six-issue MONSTER MASSACRE series with work by *Simon Bisley*, *Dave Gibbons*, *James O'Barr*, *Garry Leach*, *Kev O'Neill*, *Michael T. Gilbert*, *John Higgins* and a host of others. And there's more...A Bisley MONSTER MASSACRE T-shirt and three prestige format MONSTER MASSACRE specials! There's enough gore and gratuitous violence to make Lobo lose some sleep.

If you only buy one book this year, this has gotta be it! MAY 1993

All artwork copyright the respective artists © 1992

STRANGE EMBRACE

In four 48pp books writer/artist *David Hine* weaves a world of shadows and twisted logic worthy of Chester Brown or José Muñoz. Magical modern Gothic as terrifying as it is wondrous.
Bi-monthly from
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KINGDOM OF THE WICKED

Eerie, childlike and macabre fantasy brings together the worlds of Stephen King and Lewis Carroll in KINGDOM OF THE WICKED – a story of madness and childhood by *Ian Edginton* (Aliens, Terminator) and *D'Israeli* (Lazarus Churchyard).
MARCH 1993

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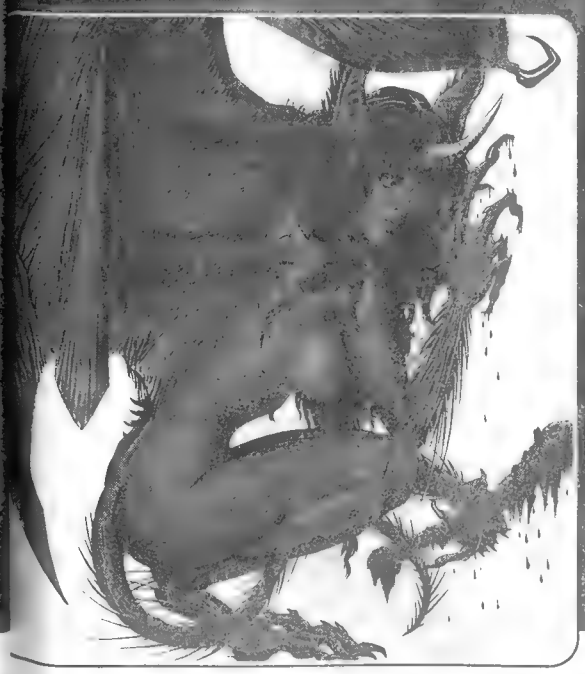

PALE HORSES

A four-issue series from *Dan Abnett* (Punisher), *Steve White* and *Gary Erskine* – PALE HORSES is the nightmare of a war in Vietnam...but this is not the 1960s. In a time not far in the future aerial combat and alien forces are at work in a war that could change the course of history...or end it!
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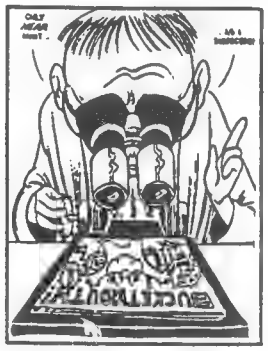

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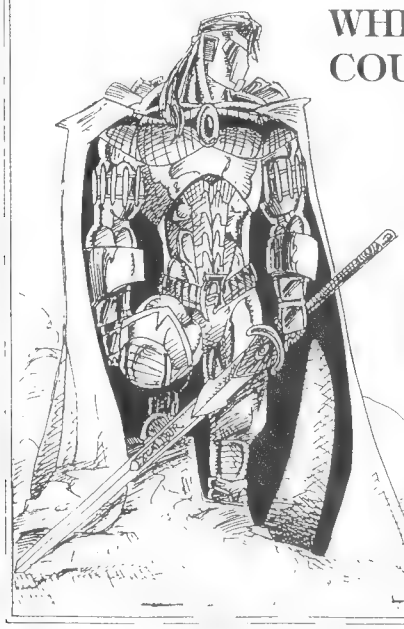

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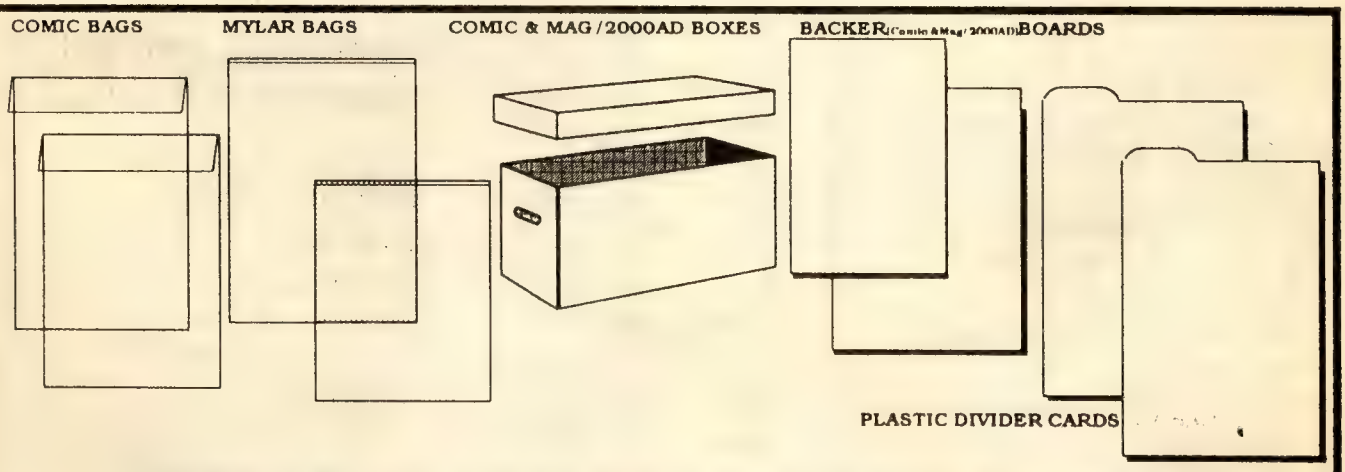

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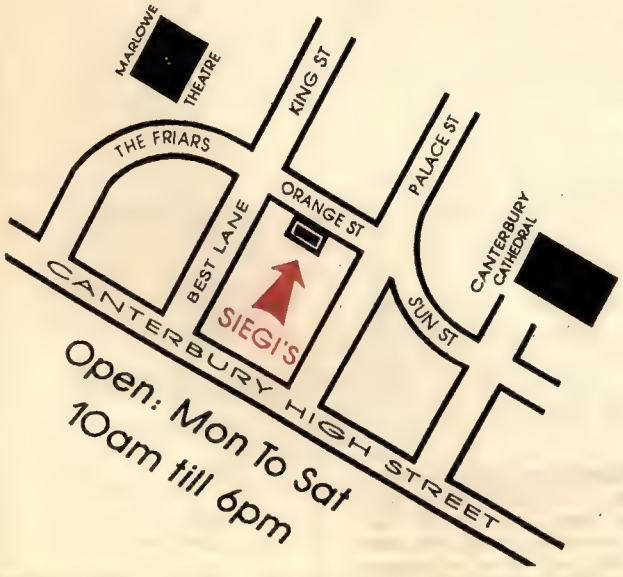

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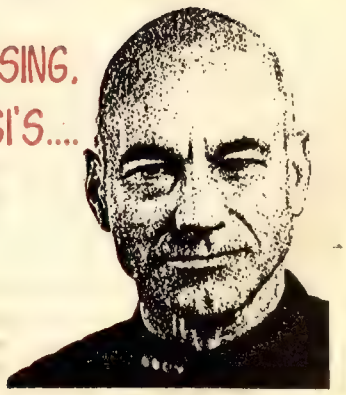

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COMIC classifieds

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ABBREVIATIONS

THIS IS A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS YOU MAY FIND IN THE CLASSIFIEDS & LISTING SECTIONS

M.	Mint Perfect
N.M.	Nearly Mint
V.F./V.F.N.	Very Fine
F.N.	Fine
V.G.	Very Good
G.	Good
F.	Fair
P.	Poor
B.S.	Bookshop Stamp on Cover
T.S.	Taped Spine
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M.C.	Marked Cover
W.B.	Water Bent
P.S.	Price Stamp

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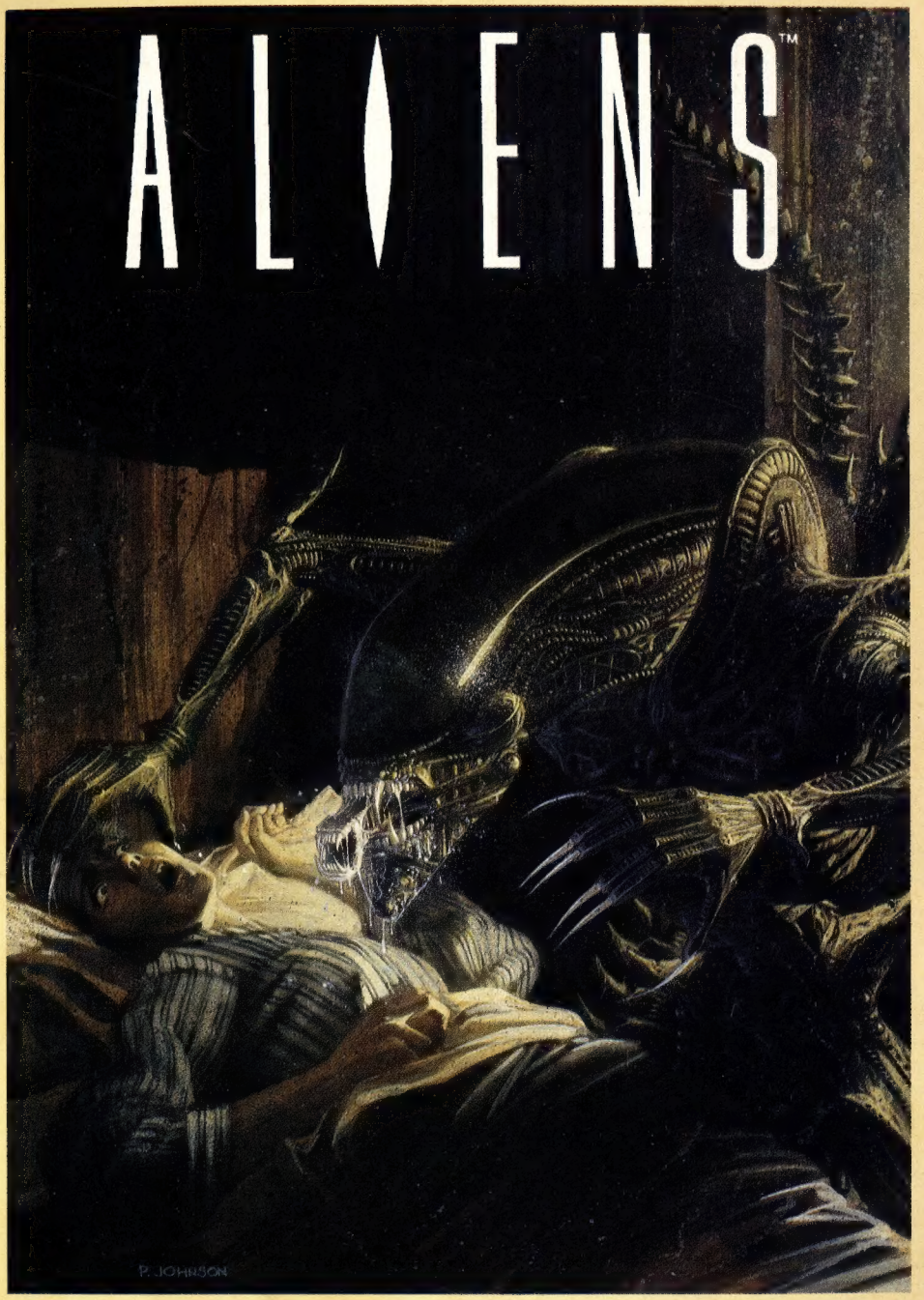

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